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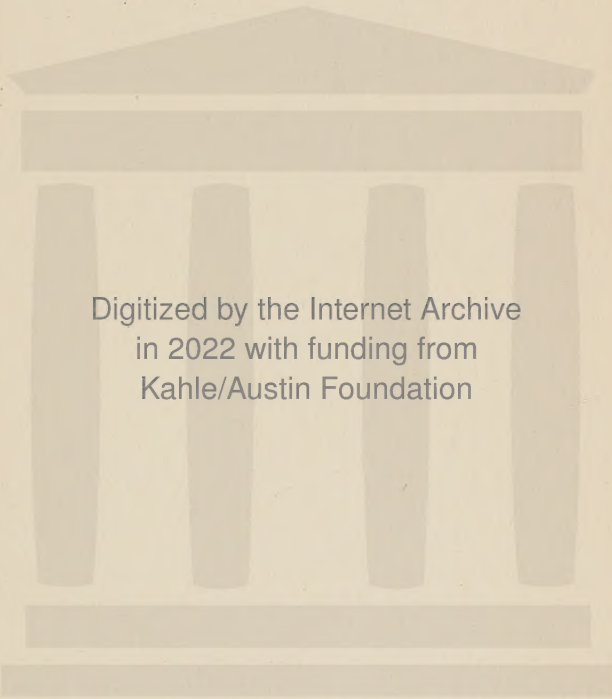
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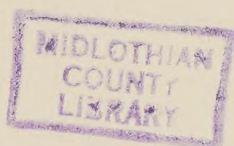
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NORTHERN NUMBERS



NORTHERN NUMBERS

BEING
REPRESENTATIVE SELECTIONS
FROM CERTAIN LIVING
SCOTTISH POETS

edited by C. M. Grieve

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T. N. FOULIS
EDINBURGH & LONDON

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twenty*

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THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED
WITH AFFECTION AND PRIDE
TO
NEIL MUNRO

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FOREWORD

THIS collection does not pretend to be in any sense an anthology of contemporary Scottish poetry. It merely consists of representative selections (chosen by the contributors themselves) from the—mainly current—work of certain Scottish poets of to-day—and to-morrow! Many contemporary writers of the highest merit, whose work will unquestionably be given a place in any future anthology of Scottish poetry embracing the output of the twentieth century, have not been invited to contribute to this volume. The chief reason for that lies in the fact that for the most part the contributors to this volume are close personal friends, and that this is rather an experiment in group-publication than an anthology.

Group-poetry developments have been a marked feature of recent British publishing. Success has largely justified the method. It is hoped that the present volume may do for some of the leading tendencies in contemporary Scottish poetry what the "Georgian Poetry" series has done for a particular group of mainly-English poets of our period.

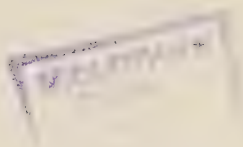
If this venture is sufficiently successful, subsequent volumes (which it is hoped will permit of the inclusion of poetical dramas as well) will be published at convenient intervals. No new contributor will, however, be admitted without the approval of a majority of the present group.

Whatever royalties accrue on this volume will be devoted towards securing the publication of subsequent similar volumes, or towards the furtherance of such other schemes for the promotion of Scottish literature as may commend themselves to the present contributors. My thanks are due to many publishers and editors who originally printed the majority of these poems. Space does not permit, unfortunately, of more detailed acknowledgment—in this edition!

C. M. G.

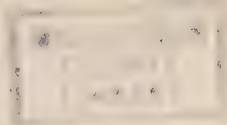
JOHN BUCHAN

FRATRI DILECTISSIMO—FISHER JAMIE—
FROM THE PENTLANDS, LOOKING NORTH
AND SOUTH



FRATRI DILECTISSIMO

W. H. B.



WHEN we were little wandering boys,
And every hill was blue and high,
On ballad ways and martial joys
We fed our fancies, you and I.
With Bruce we crouched in bracken shade;
With Douglas charged the Paynim foes;
And oft in moorland noons I played
Colkitto to your grave Montrose.

The obliterating seasons flow—
They cannot kill our boyish game.
Though creeds may change and kings may go,
Yet burns undimmed the ancient flame.
While young men in their pride make haste,
The wrong to right, the bond to free,
And plant a garden in the waste,
Still rides our Scottish chivalry.

Another end had held your dream—
To die fulfilled of hope and might,
To pass in one swift, rapturous gleam
From mortal to immortal light—
But through long hours of labouring breath,
You watched the world grow small and far,
And met the constant eyes of Death,
And haply knew how kind they are.

One boon the Fates relenting gave—
Not where the scented hill-wind blows
From cedar thickets lies your grave,
Nor 'mid the steep Himálayan snows.
Night calls the stragglers to the nest,
And at long-last 'tis home indeed
For your far-wandering feet to rest
For ever by the crooks of Tweed.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

In perfect honour, perfect truth,
And gentleness to all mankind,
You trod the golden paths of youth,
Then left the world and youth behind.
Ah, no ! 'tis we who fade and fail—
And you, from Time's slow torments free,
Shall pass from strength to strength and scale
The steeps of immortality.

Dear heart, in that serener air,
If blessed souls may backward gaze,
Some slender nook of memory spare,
For our old happy moorland days.
I sit alone and musing fills
My breast with pain that shall not die,
Till once again o'er greener hills,
We ride together, you and I.

1912.

FISHER JAMIE

PUIR Jamie's killed. A better lad
Ye wadna find to busk a flee
Or burn a püle or wield a gad
Frae Berwick to the Clints o' Dee.

And noo he's in a happier land.—
It's Gospel truith and Gospel law
That Heaven's yett maun open stand
To folk that for their country fa'.

But Jamie will be ill to mate;
He lo'ed nae müsic, kenned nae tünes
Except the sang o' Tweed in spate,
Or Talla loupin' ower its linns.

I sair misdoot that Jamie's heid
A croun o' gowd will never please;
He liked a kep o' dacent tweed
Whaur he could stick his casts o' flees.

If Heaven is a' that man can dream,
And a' that honest herts can wish,
It maun provide some muirland stream,
For Jamie dreamed o' nocht but fish.

And weel I wot he'll up and speir,
In his bit blate and canty way,
Wi' kind apostles standin' near,
Whae in their time were fishers tae.

He'll offer back his gowden croun,
And in its place a rod he'll seek,
And bashfu'-like his herp lay down,
And speir a leister and a cleek.

For Jim's had aye a poachin' whim;
He'll sune grow tired, wi' lawfu' flee

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Made frae the wings of cherubim,
O' castin' ower the Crystal Sea. . . .

I picter him at gloamin' tide,
Steekin' the back door o' his hame,
And hastin' to the waterside
To play again the auld, auld game.

And syne wi' saumon on his back,
Catch't clean against the heavenly law,
And heavenly byliffs on his track,
Gaun linkin' doun some heavenly shaw.

1916.

FROM THE PENTLANDS, LOOKING NORTH AND SOUTH.

AROUND my feet the clouds are drawn
In the cold mystery of the dawn;
No breezes cheer, no guests intrude
My mossy mist-clad solitude.
When sudden down the steeps of sky
Flames a long lightening wind. On high
The steel-blue arch shines clear, and far
In the low-lands where cattle are
Towns smoke. And swift, a haze, a gleam—
The Firth lies like a frozen stream,
Reddening with morn. Tall spires of ships,
Like thorns about the harbour's lips,
Now shake faint canvas, now, asleep,
Their salt, uneasy slumbers keep;
While golden-grey o'er kirk and wall
Day wakes in the ancient capital.

Before me lie the lists of strife,
The caravanserai of life,
Whence from the gates the merchants go
On the world's highways; to and fro
Sail laden ships; and in the street
The lone foot-traveller shakes his feet,
And in some corner by the fire
Tells the old tale of heart's desire.
Thither from alien seas and skies
Comes the far-quested merchandise—
Wrought silks of Broussa, Mocha's ware
Brown-tinted, fragrant, and the rare
Thin perfumes that the rose's breath
Has sought, immortal in her death;
Gold, gems, and spice, and haply still
The red rough largess of the hill,
Which takes the sun and bears the vines
Among the haunted Apennines,

NORTHERN NUMBERS

And he who treads the cobbled street
To-day in the cold North may meet,
Come month, come year, the dusky East
And share the Caliph's secret feast;
Or in the toil of wind and sun
Bear pilgrim-staff, forlorn, fordone,
Till o'er the steppe, athwart the sand
Gleam the far gates of Samarkand.
The ringing quay, the weathered face,
Fair skies, dusk hands, the ocean race,
The palm-girt isle, the frosty shore,
Gales and hot suns the wide world o'er,
Grey North, red South, and burnished West,
The goals of the old tireless quest.
Leap in the smoke, immortal, free
Where shines yon morning fringe of sea.

I turn—how still the moorlands lie
Sleep-locked beneath the awakening sky!
The film of morn is silver-grey
On the young heather, and away,
Dim, distant, set in ribs of hill,
Green glens are shining, stream, and mill,
Clachan and kirk and garden ground
All silent in the hush profound,
Which haunts alone the hills' recess,
The antique home of quietness.
Nor to the folk can piper play
The tune of "Hills and Far Away,"
For they are with them. Morn can fire
No peaks of weary heart's desire,
Nor the red sunset flame behind
Some ancient ridge of longing mind.
For Arcady is here, around,
In lilt of stream, in the clear sound
Of lark and moorbird, in the bold

JOHN BUCHAN

Gay glamour of the evening gold.
And so the wheel of seasons move
To kirk and market, to mild loves
And modest hates, and still the sight
Of brown, kind faces, and when night
Draws dark around with age and fear
Theirs is the simple hope to cheer.
A land of peace where lost romance
And ghostly shine of helm and lance
Still dwell by castled scarp and lea
And the lost homes of chivalry.
And the good fairy folk, my dear,
Who speak for cunning souls to hear,
In crook of glen and bower of hill
Sing of the Happy Ages still.

O Thou to whom man's heart is known,
Grant me my morning orison.
Grant me the rover's path—to see
The dawn arise, the daylight flee
In the far wastes of sand and sun!
Grant me with venturous heart to run
On the old highway, where in pain
And ecstasy man strives amain,
Outstrips his fellows, or, too weak,
Finds the great rest that wanderers seek!
Grant me the joy of wind and brine,
The zest of food, the taste of wine,
The fighter's strength, the echoing strife,
The high tumultuous lists of life—
May I ne'er lag, nor hapless fall,
Nor weary at the battle-call!
But when the even brings surcease
Grant me the happy moorland peace;
That in my heart's depth ever lie
That ancient land of heath and sky,

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Where the old rhymes and stories fall
In kindly, soothing pastoral.
There in the hills sweet silence lies,
And Death himself wears friendly guise;
There be my lot, my twilight stage,
Dear city of my pilgrimage.

1898.

VIOLET JACOB

THE WHUSTLIN' LAD—HOGMANAY—THE
HOWE O' THE MEARNs—CRAIGO WOODS—
JOCK, TO THE FIRST ARMY

THE WHUSTLIN' LAD

THERE'S a wind comes doon frae the braes when
the licht is spreadin'
Chilly an' grey,
And the auld cock craws at the yett o' the muirland
steadin'

Cryin' on day;
The hoose lies sound an' the sma' mune's deevin' and weary,
Watchin' her lane,
The shadows creep by the dyke an' the time seems eerie,
But the lad i' the fields he is whustlin', whustlin' cheery,
'Yont i' the rain.

My mither stirs as she wauks wi' her twa een blinkin';
Bedded she'll bide,
For foo can an auld wife ken what a lassie's thinkin'
Close at her side?
Mither, lie still, for ye're needin' a rest fu' sairly,
Weary an' worn,
Mither, I'll rise, an' ye ken I'll be warkin' fairly—
An' I dinna ken *wha* can be whustlin', whustlin' airly
Lang or it's morn!

Gin ye hear a soond like the sneck o' the back-door turnin',
Fash na for it;
It's just the crack i' the lum o' the green wood burnin',
Ill to be lit;
Gin ye hear a step, it's the auld mear loose i' the stable,
Stampin' the strae,
Or mysel' that's settin' the parritch-spunes on the table,
Sae turn ye about an' sleep, mither, sleep while ye're able,
Rest while ye may.

Up at the steadin' the trail of the mist has liftit
Clear frae the groond,
Mither breathes saft an' her face to the wa' she's shiftit—
Aye, but she's soond!

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NORTHERN NUMBERS

"Lad, ye may come, for there's nane but mysel' will hear ye
Oot by the stair,
But whustle you on, an' I winna hae need to fear ye,
For, laddie, the lips that keep whustlin', whustlin' cheery,
Canna dae mair!"

HOGMANAY

to a Pipe Tune

O H, it's fine when the New and the Auld Year meet,
An' the lads gang roarin' i' the lichtit street,
An' there's me and there's Alick an' the miller's loon,
An' Geordie, that's the piper oot o' Forfar toon.

Geordie Faa! Geordie Faa!

Up wi' the chanter, lad, and gie's a blaw!
For we'll step to the tune while we've feet intill oor shune,
Tho' the bailies an' the provost be to sort us a'!

We've three bonnie bottles, but the third ane's toom,
Gin the road ran whisky, it's mysel' wad soom!
But we'll stan' while we can, an' be dancin' while we may,
For there's twa we hae to finish, an' it's Hogmanay.

Geordie Faa! Geordie Faa!

There's an auld carle glow'rin' oot ahint yon wa',
But we'll sune gar him loup to the pipin' till he coup,
For we'll gie him just a drappie, an' he'll no say na!

My heid's dementit an' my feet's the same,
When they'll no wark thegither it's a lang road hame,
An' we've twa mile to traivel or it's mair like three,
But I've got a grip o' Alick, an' he'd best grip me.

Geordie Faa! Geordie Faa!

The morn's near brakin' an' we'll need awa',
Gin ye're aye blawin' strang, then we'll maybe get alang,
An' the deevil tak' the laddie that's the first to fa'!

THE HOWE O' THE MEARNS

LADDIE, my lad, when ye gang at the tail o' the
plough,
An' the days draw in,
When the burnin' yellow's awa' that was aince a-lowe
On the braes o' whin,
Div ye mind o' me that's deaved wi' the wearyfu' south
An' its puir consairns,
While the weepies fade on the knowes at the river's mouth
In the Howe o' the Mearns?

There was nae twa lads frae the Grampians doon to the
Tay
That could best us twa;
At bothie or dance, or the field on a fitba' day,
We could sort them a';
An' at coortin'-time, when the stars keeked doon on the
glen,
An' its theek o' fairns,
It was you an' me got the pick o' the basket then
In the Howe o' the Mearns.

London is fine, an' for ilk o' the lasses at hame
There'll be saxty here,
But the springtime comes an' the hairst—an' it's aye the
same
Through the changefu' year.
Oh, a lad thinks lang o' hame ere he thinks his fill
As his breid he airns—
An' they're thrashin' noo at the white fairm up on the hill
In the Howe o' the Mearns.

Gin I mind mysel' an' toil for the lave o' my days,
While I've een to see,
When I'm auld an' done wi' the fash o' their English ways,
I'll come hame to dee;
For the lad dreams aye o' the prize that the man'll get,
But he lives an' lairns,

VIOLET JACOB

n' it's far, far ayont him still—but it's farther yet
To the Howe o' the Mearns.

addie, my lad, when the hair is white on yèr pow,
An' the wark's pit past,
When yer hand's owre auld an' heavy to haud the plough
I'll win hame at last.
nd we'll bide our time on the knowes whaur the broom
stands braw,
An' we played as bairns,
ill the last lang gloamin' shall creep on us baith, an' fa'
On the Howe o' the Mearns.

CRAIGO WOODS

CRAIGO Woods, wi' the splash' o' the cauld rain
 beatin'

 I' the back end o' the year,
When the clouds hang laigh wi' the weicht o' their load o'
 greetin',

 And the autumn wind's asteer;
Ye may stand like ghaists, ye may fa' i' the blast that's
 cleft ye

 To rot i' the chilly dew,
But when will I mind on aucht since the day I left ye
 Like I mind on you—on you?

Craig Woods, i' the licht o' September sleepin'
 And the saft mist o' the morn,
When the hairst climbs to yer feet, an' the sound o' reapin'
 Comes up frae the stookit corn,
And the braw reid puddock-stules are like jewels blinkin',
 And the bramble happs ye baith,
Oh, what do I see i' the lang nicht, lyin' an' thinkin',
 As I see yer wraith—yer wraith?

There's a road to a far-aff land, an' the land is yonder
 Whaur a' men's hopes are set;
We dinna ken foo lang we maun hae to wander,
 But we'll a' win to it yet;
An' gin there's woods o' fir an' the licht atween them,
 I winna speir its name,
But I'll lay me doon by the puddock-stules when I've seen
 them,
 And I'll cry,—“I'm hame—I'm hame!”

JOCK, TO THE FIRST ARMY

O RAB an' Dave an' rantin' Jim,
The geans were turnin' reid
When Scotland saw yer line grow dim,
Wi' the pipers at its heid ;
Noo, i' yon warld ye dinna ken,
Like strangers ye maun gang—
*"We've sic a wale o' Angus men
That we canna weary lang."*

An' little Wat—my brither Wat—
Man, are ye aye the same?
Or is yon sma' white hoose forgot,
Doon by the strath at hame?
An' div' ye mind foo aft we trod
The Isla's banks before?—
*"My place is wi' the Hosts o' God
But I mind me o' Strathmore."*

It's deith comes skirling through the sky,
Below there's naucht but pain,
We canna see whaur deid men lie
For the drivin' o' the rain;
Ye a' hae passed frae fear an' doot,
Ye're far frae airthly ill—
*"We're near, we're here, my wee recruit,
An' we fecht for Scotland still."*

NEIL MUNRO

LAMENT FOR MACLEOD OF RAASAY—THE
BELLS O' BANFF—LOCHABER NO MORE!
—JOHN O' LORN—FINGAL'S WEEPING

LAMENT FOR MACLEOD OF RAASAY

ALLAN Ian Og Macleod of Raasay,
Treasure of mine, lies yonder dead in Loos,
His body unadorned by Highland raiment,
Trammelled, for glorious hours, in Saxon trews.
Never man before of all his kindred
Went so apparelled to the burial knowe,
But with the pleated tartan for his shrouding,
The bonnet on his brow.

O my grief! that Allan should depart so sadly,
When no wild mountain pipe his bosom wrung,
With no one of his race beside his shoulder,
Who knew his history and spoke his tongue.
Ah! lonely death and drear for darling Allan!
Before his ghost had taken wings and gone,
Loud would he cry in Gaelic to his gallants,
"Children of storm, press on!"

Beside him, when he fell there in his beauty,
Macleods of all the islands should have died;
Brave hearts his English!—but they could not fathom
To what old deeps the voice of Allan cried,
When in that strange French countryside, war-battered,
Far from the creeks of home and hills of heath,
A boy, he kept the old tryst of his people
With the dark girl Death.

O Allan Ian Og! O Allan aluinn!
Sore is my heart remembering the past,
And you of Raasay's ancient gentle children
The farthest-wandered, kindest and last.
It should have been the brave dead of the islands
That heard ring o'er their tombs your battle-cry,
To shake them from their sleep again, and quicken
Peaks of Torridon and Skye!

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Gone in the mist the brave Macleods of Raasay,
Far furth from fortune, sundered from their lands,
And now the last grey stone of Castle Raasay
Lies desolate and levelled with the sands;
But pluck the old isle from its roots deep planted
Where tides cry coronach round the Hebrides,
And it will bleed of the Macleods lamented,
Their loves and memories!

THE BELLS O' BANFF

AS I gaed down the water-side
I heard a maiden sing,
All in the lee-lone Sabbath morn,
And the green glen answering,
"No longer hosts encountering hosts
Shall clouds of slain deplore,
They hang the trumpet in the hall,
And study war no more."

Dead men of ancient tumults lay
In dust below her feet;
Their spirits breathed to her but scents
Of mint and the meadow-sweet;
Singing her psalm, her bosom calm
As the dappled sky above,
She thought the world was dedicate
For evermore to love!

O God! my heart was like to break,
Hearing her guileless strain,
For pipes screamed through the Highland hills,
And swords were forth again;
And little did the lassie ken
Banff's battle bells were ringing;
Her lad was in the gear of war
While she was happy singing!

LOCHABER NO MORE!

FAREWELL to Lochaber, farewell to the glen,
No more will he wander Lochaber again.
Lochaber no more! Lochaber no more!
The lad will return to Lochaber no more!
The trout will come back from the deeps of the sea,
The bird from the wilderness back to the tree,
Flowers to the mountain and tides to the shore,
But he will return to Lochaber no more!

Oh, why should the hills last, that never were young,
Unperishing stars in the heavens be hung;
Be constant the seasons, undrying the stream,
And he that was gallant be gone like a dream?
Brave songs will be singing in isles of the West,
But he will be silent who sang them the best;
The dance will be waiting, the pipes will implore,
But he will return to Lochaber no more!

Child of the forest! profound is thy sleep,
The valley that loved thee awakes but to weep;
When our fires are rekindled at dawn of the morn,
Our griefs burn afresh, and our prayers are forlorn;
The night falls disconsolate, bringing no peace,
No hope for our dreams, for our sighs no release;
In vain come the true hearts and look from the door,
For thou wilt return to Lochaber no more!

JOHN O' LORN

MY plaid is on my shoulder and my boat is on the shore,
And it's all bye wi' auld days and you;
Here's a health and here's a heartbreak, for it's hame, my dear, no more,
To the green glens, the fine glens we knew!

'Twas for the sake o' glory, but oh! wae upon the wars,
That brought my father's son to sic a day;
I'd rather be a craven wi' nor fame nor name nor scars,
Than turn an exile's heel on Moidart Bay.

And you, in the daytime, you'll be here, and in the mirk,
Wi' the kind heart, the open hand and free;
And far awa' in foreign France, in town or camp or kirk,
I'll be wondering if you keep a thought for me.

But nevermore the heather nor the bracken at my knees,
I'm poor John o' Lorn, a broken man;
For an auld Hielan' story I must sail the swinging seas,
A chief without a castle or a clan.

My plaid is on my shoulder and my boat is on the shore,
And it's all bye wi' auld days and you;
Here's a health and here's a heartbreak, for it's hame, my dear, no more,
To the green glens, the fine glens we knew!

FINGAL'S WEEPING

BECAUSE they were so brave and young
Who now are sleeping,
His old heart wrung, his harp unstrung,
Fingal's a-weeping.

There's warble of waters at morning in Etive glen,
And the mists are flying;
Chuckle of Spring in the wood, on the moor, on the ben,
No heed for their dying!
So Fingal's weeping, the young brave sleeping,
Fingal's weeping.

They'll be forgot in Time—forgot!
Time that goes sweeping;
The wars they fought remembered not,
And Fingal's weeping.

Hearken for voices of sorrow for them in the forest den
Where once they were rovers—
Only the birds of the wild at their building again,
Whispering of lovers!
So Fingal's weeping, his old grief keeping,
Fingal's weeping.

They should be mourned by the ocean wave
Round lone isles creeping,
But the laughing wave laments no grave,
And Fingal's weeping.

Morven and Moidart, glad, gallant and gay in the sun,
Rue naught departed;
The moon and the stars shine out when the day is done,
Cold, stony-hearted,
And Fingal's weeping war's red reaping,
Fingal's weeping!

WILL. H. OGILVIE

THE SCOTCH FIR—THE KINGSHIP OF THE HILLS—
FLODDEN HILL—TILL THE KING RETURNS—THE
BROWN BURNS—A BORDER POET—THE BLADES OF
HARDEN—A BORDERER

THE SCOTCH FIR

THIS is the tallest tree within my woods,
Lean, rugged-stemmed, and of all branches bare
Full thirty feet, with green plumes in the air
And roots among the bracken. All his moods
Are rough but kingly; whether, grand, he broods
Above his full-leaved comrades in the glare
Of summer, or in winter, still more fair,
Nods princely time to the wind's interludes.

Beauty may claim the beeches, elm and oak
Stir sentiment in England; but the fir
Stands here for Scotland and the bleak bare North.
Too tall to stoop to any servile yoke,
Too strong of heart to more than lightly stir
When the worst storm-winds of the world break forth.

THE KINGSHIP OF THE HILLS

BORN in the purple the red grouse cry;
Born in the purple the whaups reply;
Born in the purple the clouds are kings
Sailing away on their snow-white wings.
The eagle high on the ruby peak
Has the scorn o' the vale in his curling beak;
And every burn that goes dancing down
Has a purple robe and a silver crown.

The lightnings flash like a jewel-band;
The thunder rolls like a king's command;
With a palace-roof of the windy stars
Where God looks over His golden bars.
Here, in the pride of all high-born things
The red deer go with the gait of kings;
And only a step from their cottage doors
The rough hill-shepherds are emperors.

FLODDEN HILL

WHEN the dusk draws home the cattle
What knights in their trenches turn?
What fires of the pride of battle
Through the bars of their helmets burn?
What steeds are the bridles biting?
What hafts are the gauntlets fitting?
What casques are the claymores splitting
To toss to the hawk and hern?

When the moon is a-march in Heaven,
When the beautiful woods are still,
What trumpet-call is given?
What troop rides over the hill?
What horses come proudly neighing?
What songs are the night-winds saying
To the torn red pennons swaying
A-dip to the tide of Till?

When the brown owls hoot in shadow,
When the raiding foxes call,
What King comes over the meadow
To put to the touch his all?
What blades in the moon are gleaming,
What blackcock feathers are streaming
Above those hosts of dreaming
This flower of a land to fall?

Was there ever a trumpet calling?
Was there ever a troop rode by?
Was it only the dead leaves falling
That wailed to a windy sky?
Is there no grass red and sodden?
No trampled field and trodden,
Is it only a dream of Flodden
Where silent the dead men lie?

TILL THE KING RETURNS

THE wild rose twines on the gateway there,
The green weed grows and the bramble clings,
Barring the road to thy hearth, Traquair,
With the loyal hands of the earth's green things;
The wind through the rusted iron sings,
The sun on the self-sown tangle burns,
But never a hoof on the roadway rings—
The gate is shut till the King returns.

I had a lover gallant and fair—
Ah! naught but sorrow the memory brings!—
I opened my heart to him; everywhere
He was my guest, and his right a king's;
But lightly his love at the last took wings,
Flying away with the hawks and hems,
And a gate no more on its hinges swings—
My heart is shut till my king returns.

THE BROWN BURNS

from "The Land we Love"

THE brown burns of the Border,
They hasten down the vale
On shallows through the sunlight,
In spates before the gale.
Grey dawn and rosy sunset
Lie mirrored in their breast,
Who call us forth to labour
And lead us home to rest.

They cool our knee-deep cattle,
They turn our drowsy mills,
They bring to us the music
Of our blue eternal hills.
They count our crumbling arches,
They tell our lichen'd towers,
And wake with soft insistence
Some ancient pride of ours.

Sweet with the scent of heather,
Clean from the clasp of peat,
They dance to please our children,
Against their rosy feet.
They guide our youths and maidens
When love has bid them roam;
They lead our tired fathers
Along the last road home.

For thought of whence they gather,
For love of where they wend,
For pride of flowers they cherish
And fields that they befriend.
When all sounds else are silent,
When all songs else depart,
The brown burns of the Border
Shall sing within my heart.

A BORDER POET

THE green of God's earth
Is the floor of the fane
Where he worships the worth
Of the sun and the rain.

The blue of God's sky
Is the roof and the dome
Of the store-house where lie
The rich gems of his home.

Each vale as it dips,
Each stream and its strand,
Is a song to his lips
And a harp to his hand.

Each hill, near and far,
Holds the gleam of the lance
Of an Armstrong or Kerr
In the days of Romance.

And the bard of this land
That was spoil to the strong
Still shall raid with rash hand
The wide Marches of Song.

THE BLADES OF HARDEN

from "Whaup o' the Rede"

HO! for the blades of Harden!
Ho! for the driven kye!
The broken gate and the lances' hate,
And a banner red on the sky!
The rough road runs by the Carter;
The white foam creams on the rein;
Ho! for the blades of Harden!
"There will be moonlight again."

The dark has heard them gather,
The dawn has bowed them by,
To the guard on the roof comes the drum of a hoof
And the drone of a hoof's reply.
There are more than birds on the hill to-night,
And more than winds on the plain!
The threat of the Scotts has filled the moss,
"There will be moonlight again."

Ho! for the blades of Harden!
Ho! for the ring of steel!
The stolen steers of a hundred years
Come home for a Kirkhope meal!
The ride must risk its fortune,
The raid must count its slain,
The March must feed her ravens,
"There will be moonlight again!"

Ho! for the blades of Harden!
Ho! for the pikes that cross!
Ho! for the king of lance and ling
—A Scott on the Ettrick moss!
The rough road runs by the Carter,
The white foam creams on the rein;
And aye for the blades of Harden
"There will be moonlight again!"

A BORDERER

BROKEN keep and burning farm
Taught his fathers strength of arm;
Feud and fight from gate to gate
Showed them how to nurse their hate.

Girth-deep moss and clinging mire
Taught them patience in desire;
Four-foot wall and lintel tough
Taught them how to take rebuff.

Pikes that thrust and thrust again
Steeled their hearts and made them men.

Thus he learned in lore of eld
How the foremost trench is held.

White roads winding through the corn
Point the farm where he was born;
Elm trees arching it with shade
Mark the garden where he played.

Here he came, one week of leave,
With the new stripe on his sleeve,
Trampling through the dust of June
To some jingling soldier-tune.

* * * * *

Here was lad as stout of thew
As our Flodden ever knew;
Here a heart that went to war,
Clean as winds on Newton Tor.

Now with many more he lies,
Youth's imperial sacrifice,
Where the Border's patriot sons
Broke against the Turkish guns.

Where above the Dardanelles,
Crowned with Fame's own immortelles,
Border spirit, staunch as steel,
Holds the crest with brave M'Neile.

T. S. CAIRNCROSS

GLENDEARG — LANGHOLM — THE MARTYR
GRAVES—TO J. B. SELKIRK—SUNSET—GREY
GALLOWAY—A BORDER RUIN—THE MERLE
IN THE MAY

GLENDIARG

GAUNT, sequestered, blanched,
Naked it stands: unforgetful,
A star of old story.

Its red wistful grey with age,
Its light a long shadow
Of time in the shafts of the sun;
And deep by the Elwyn,
Where Carnea Crux passed over
To the chapel of latest resting,
Nothing but peace.

Hard by its ruins
Swords of yore have been gleaming
That dared, and feared no one;
And over its quiet pastures
Sang the march of the armies of Scotland.
Ah! the red rain: where to-day sheep browse peaceful
On the fells of its southland,
All quiet now.

The Abbot is gone,
With book, stole and vestment,
His name but a bed of flowers;
The Wizard who charmed him
Sleeps in his Abbey tomb;
Children of dreams; no more;
And o'er its antiquity
The runnel tinkles and chatters,
A thread of gold.

Nothing to me—all its lost chapters,
Yet have I part in it all.
And since I am child
Of the Borders and this Border glory,
Shall I not honour
The name and the fame
In a garland of song!

LANGHOLM

IT lies by the heather slopes,
Where God spilt the wine of the moorland
Brimming the beaker of hills. Lone it lies
A rude outpost: challenging stars and dawn,
And down from remoteness
And the Balladland of the Forest
The Pictish Esk trails glory,
Rippling the quiet eaves
With the gold of the sun.

Here casts the angler,
Half-hid in shadow: his eyes
Veiled with rapt contemplation,
Where raider and reiver darted and harried.
Those mild terrible eyes
Came down from Flodden.

He hints and bends over the crystal waters
In large content,
The Roman Road all empty
By death's stern sure outlawing,
With here in great spaces of the wind and sunshine
Life at the full!

O border shadow!
A silhouette of silence and old years
Ever abide: now the clang of the long day over,
The little town shall fold itself to rest
With through its dreams the chequered river gleaming
In luminous peace!

.

THE MARTYR GRAVES

DEAD, long dead,
Irrevocably lost and dead
Years and years ago.

And over their bones the hill winds pass
In the trail of the weeping mists—
The mists that go sheeted and grey on the moors,
Like desolate spirits
Of some dead day.

A voice calls
From the hopeful, hurrying past
In splendid faith about the bracken void,
And old grey days of home,
Faded and tawdry,
Burst to life again,
Transfigured with the glow of transient time,
As some procession in an Eastern land
Emerges to the radiance of the sun.
And here to-day,
On the vague Covenant moors
And uplands, grey with death and mist of stones,
Far away,
From where the sickly generations go,
I see the children of an early faith
Pass in their fame.

In this fierce, sudden light
The unforgotten dead,
Joyous and glad, go free.

They are the men who fought for us and died:
And yet who won.
Singing they pass
With their high pæan pulsing full of life—
The unfulfilled;
And all the martyr graves

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Are glorious again
As this full light falls on their sepulchres.
Portioners of a little flesh and blood they were;
And heirs of death;
Yet kings of hope
With the fierce fighter's joy,
Battling for no vain faith that fades and dies
Or hopeless loyalty,
But for a kingdom more imperishable
Than their renown.

But who will save
The feeble, flickering race
Upon whose martyr graves
The shadow falls,
And in whose fleeting day
The hour is late?

TO J. B. SELKIRK

YOUR sun leans to the westward
And mine climbs on towards noon,
And the border hills are between us
And fremyt is Selkirk Toun.

But once in the days of dreaming,
When every rose was fair,
I paused on the slopes of Selkirk
And I know I saw you there.

You, who have written of Flodden
And Yarrow and Ettrick Braes,
And the pathos and love of the Border
That shine in her eyes always.

And we both have drawn from the hillstream
And cheered as the men went by,
Booted and spurred, on the heather
Who never came back to die.

And you shot the web with silver;
And you have sung of the corn
That never was harvested: never!
And the brides that lay forlorn.

And your sun shall glow in the westward
When mine is eclipsed at noon;
But the clang of the clogs shall echo
The ring of the single-soled shoon.

SUNSET

LONG ago,
When the earth was a child full of laughter,
Joy in her chariot of gold
Glinted and passed. Scattered she there
Lilies like pearls of the ocean,
Roses ruddy as dawning,
Heart's-ease, daffodils, pansies,
Rosemary, rue.

The stream caught her silver laugh
All a-ripple: birds on the wing her cry.
Her girdle of peerless green
Over the hills was shining,
And over the purple heather
The russet of her hair.

Peasants were gleaning
In wells of the sun silhouetted; stole the blue
Of her eye the cornflower: the poppies her dream
And her rosary diamonds the dew;
Yet ever she rode
Right on to the silence,
And out of her Horn of Plenty
Fell songs of her bridal morning,
Unto the great Going Down,
And even till that dim light
That falleth from the stars.

GREY GALLOWAY

I LIE and dream about the waking light
In this grey Galloway land so bleak and sere:
And figures of another age appear
From clan and hamlet girt with magic might;
Wild men pass freely, haggard as at night
The shadows move in mist: yet sign of fear
Is not upon their faces; but austere
And proud as kings they gather for the fight.

The years go by, and still both moor and mount
Wear their memorials of a sterner day:
Here age and death are held of no account,
The moors have led the centuries astray,
And deep life breaks in me a sudden fount,
Silent as light in old grey Galloway.

A BORDER RUIN

A WAY in lost brown reaches of the heather
Cold, bare it stands, a bleak, primeval thing,
Flaunting the summer skies and April weather,
Where snipe rise and the lark forgets to sing,
As one who slips to age and cannot die;
A chapel worn with prostrate knees of prayer,
A shadow of a memory long gone by,
The ghost of dead days lingering, dreaming there.

It heard the Raiders cry and gave no sign,
And looked not forth on mailed men shining past
To Mary of the Lowes and Douce Cœur fine;
And some more fortunate came here at last
And laid them down in revel of June skies
Unwitting; all their fight and wandering o'er;
And time with coloured wings that careless flies
Forgot them; they were spent and wearied sore.

The little windows like a quaint tourelle
That glimmers in Lorraine or Languedoc
Shine like dead eyes: the solitary cell
That shuddered at the sound of battle-shock
Is silent as the tombs beside its wall
That silver birch festoon with mocking arms,
And gone the tonsured anchorite whose call
Rose heavenward in the din of death's alarms.

His world was peace; the white feet of the dawn
Came to him where he knelt in jewelled day,
Raising his orison: his orchard-lawn
Still untemplated where lithe deer play:
Of old the weary shadow of his life
Fell over, and his broken heart of woe
Gave back in glittering fragments all the strife
As once death lit the face of Mirabeau.

The tiny spring threads trickling in the sun
A spray of diamonds, and in vacant years

T. S. CAIRNCROSS

The blackbird comes and timid redbreasts run,
Ah me, a scanty living, for none hears
The ploughshare cleave deep furrow in the spring,
Lush yellow breadths of corn are all unknown,
The birds that come are only on the wing,
The Hermit ploughs a surer furrow lone.

For he has peopled this far hermitage
With meditative shadows of the soul
And men that live: no tempest shall assuage
Their splendour, and no tide of time shall roll
To obliterate their foot-prints from of yore,
Or cleave their ranks or break their going-by,
For they were men of prophecy, with store
Of the world's best and greatest in their cry.

His eyes were fair, he had them from sea-kings:
Dane, Northman, Angle, all looked forth and cried
Like faces at the lattice; august things
Of Venerable Bede found song and plied
Their wings even in that stifled day of cloud,
Seeking the zenith sun and clearer air,
For they were for the noon-day and were bowed
At morning twilight with their hope a prayer.

No decorated proverb trimmed his sin
In a pathetic folly; no disguise
Of learning wrapped him round and bound him in:
His heart was ample and his brain was wise;
Haply he lit on God, and groping found
Him all his need: he flung his proverbs out
To all the windy schools, and on the ground
Slept like Aurelius in the careless rout.

And no man harmed him, for he lived on high
Like the rare bird that keeps a lowly nest

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Taking the heavens; and his arch of sky
Was rounded by the stars beyond the west
And flaming sundown; and the moors were lit
With majesty and music in his dreams;
The angels spread his board, his bread was fit
And sweet to taste, his wine glanced in the streams.

The little crucifix is hanging still
Beside the altar as if Rubens here
Had limned its sorrow and from Calvary Hill
Had traced the lines in blood with many a tear:
And many an eye has seen it. Here, perchance,
Knelt a rich Milton of an elder time,
Or from his eyes looked Wordsworth with keen glance
And beatific vision of high clime.

I see it all, though all is centuries gone,
The rubble stands a crude religious joy,
And nothing is of all that rose and shone
On that dark day, and nothing can destroy
The framework: or the thought that built so deep
And soared so high and carved so chaste and pure,
Chiselling its fancy like a thing in sleep
Set free from fetters of the low life sure.

For this my day is flushed and out of breath,
Seeking strange treasure in the crowded land,
And has forgot the moors and life and death,
And the still sanctuary that clasps a hand
In brotherhood with all the saints of God,
Out of the shadows of a silent home;
And I who weary of the brown path broad
Find rest beside the ruins when I roam.

THE MERLE IN THE MAY

MINE is a tranquil garden-plot
Full quaintly set apart from care;
Acacia and forget-me-not
And lawn and boxwood linger there;
And apple-bloom and silver birch
Are nodding tremulous by the way,
But fairest in the falling mirk
Is when the merle sings in the may.

All morning in a shower of pearl
And sunlight, like a golden rain
His notes fall; amethyst and beryl
He scatters in his regal train,
And on the beech he sits a king,
All song his kingdom, and when day
Sinks in the west, an idle thing,
He sings a-dallying in the may.

Where sparkling footlights feed the stage,
I, too, have listened white with joy,
Taking the gift, but carping age
Hath dulled the fine gold with alloy,
And made me weary of it all,
The pain, the tears, the trick, the play;
And I have longed to hear the call
The merle makes singing in the may.

All the glad innocence of hope
Unfestered with the weight of things,
Rises and shines; the velvet slope
Grows radiant where he peerless sings;
The unintelligible strife
Dissolves superb before his ray,
And leaves him singing of the life
He loves felicitous in the may.

The jewelled word all carved and quaint,
The antique phrase so richly set,

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Are glittering as the light grows faint
In priceless vantage of vignette;
And all my heart is hung with joy
And fringed with music; who shall say
What far-off memories I prolong
Where thou, merle, singest in the may?

And no man heeds thee. All are bent
On the world's pleasure or its task;
They come, they go, thy song is lent
A little moment; yet all ask
Nothing of thee; the ripples flow
In bead and eddy, die away;
O vacant souls that never know
What hour the merle sings in the may

Be mine to hear and mine to live,
And mine to worship, ere the sun
Turneth to darkness, and above
The stars proclaim that day is done;
For then, methinks, I have not passed
To fruitless nothing all astray,
If on my failure at the last
The merle sings golden in the may.

C. M. GRIEVE

LA BELLE TERRE SANS MERCI—ALLEGIANCE
—MOUNTAIN MEASURE—TO A FRENCH GIRL
FRIEND—BEYOND EXILE—TO M. G.

LA BELLE TERRE SANS MERCI*

HATCHMENTS of houses multitudinous
Shine starry-white, and Eden-green
Glimmer the cypress groves innumeros
That sit between,
And many a slender spire
Of silver fire
Shoots heavenward. Over the foothills run
The tides of stone and leaf in terraces
Full on the toppling towers of Yedi-Coule
Worn by th' imponderable sun
To shadows dun,
One scarce distinguishes
From lion-coloured shapes of far great peaks,
Where streams the East in many a sapphire pool
And silence speaks—
Speaks with the voice of War,
Thundering afar!

The broad seas are a mesh of quivering gold
Full of a haul miraculous,
Of sailing ships and warships bold
And fruit-boats odorous.
See where Olympus sounding soars
Like Heaven's walls!—
Where dark the Vardar pours
And sorrow calls—
And all the blue-grey hills of Thessaly
Stand to the sea.
High in the throbbing skies
Twinkles an aeroplane
Dim as an early star,
Flashes and fades afar,
Swims into sight again,
And swoops and springs enormous in our eyes!

* Salonika.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

And when night falls—Psathoura's gleam
And pyramidal Athos starred,
And Lemnos sleeping there
And Mitylene dim in dream!
The young moon swings up slim and fair
And all the bay is silver barred—
But now the sleeping soldiers are
In Cornwall or in London Town
Or Donegal afar,
Or where the Gaelic hills look down
On Gaelic villages,
Heedless that still the trembling breeze
Murmurs with every breath
That some one perisheth!

By every silver minaret
In emerald cypress set,
By the incomparable bay
Whereby the city stands,
By all the memoried battlements
That still the centuried storms defy
And lift into the equal sky
A mighty monument to Time
Unbroken yet.
And by the incommemorate hands
That shaped them so, but long to dust returned,
While still the sunlight burns like wine
Where their strong faith is urned;
By all the fire in Eastern eyes,
By all the light in Eastern skies,
By colour and the coloured breeze,
By music and the choiring seas,
By sorrow and the endless graves,
By life and all the human waves,
I deemed the scene miraculously fair
With glory golden in the air,

C. M. GRIEVE

And blessed the fate that gave my eyes
To light on Paradise.

O Siren of the wrecking shores,
O Mirage of the desert lands,
Mother of whores
With leprous hands—
“Unclean!—Unclean!”
O prostituted skies,
Worthy of Paradise,
O luring hills whose glory is a lie,
The calm crystalline light that on Olympus lies
The alabaster is of Death embalmed,
A lantern for the damned
To light their orgies by!

Death gives the ball
And sets the pace withal.
Syphilis in silver hides
Her running wounds and rotting bones.
Fever is clothed in gold.
Gaily-caparisoned War rides
And on the pointed stones
The dervish Dysentery whirls
Attenuate,
While all in pearls
And gleaming rubies hung,
She who devours her young
Insatiate!

By all the apple cheeks have here been blanched,
By all the shining eyes have here been dimmed,
By all the wounds unstanch'd,
By all the dead unhymned,
By every broken heart
And every ruined mind—
The eyes are opened that were blind,
And know thee for the murderess thou art!

ALLEGIANCE

written on the Mediterranean

“THE ancient chorus of the rich blue flood,
The mystic sundance of the Middle Seas,
What have you in your heart, Scots Borderman,
Prithee, that can compare with these?”

“A brown stream chunners in my heart always.
I know slim waters that the sun makes dance
With splendid subtlety and suppleness,
And many a green and golden glance.”

“See by the Spanish and the Afric coasts,
The sailing vessels go with precious freight,
Of silk and costly oil and coloured fruit,
And treasures of the antique great!”

“I see: but in my treasure-chest I have
Chimes of the red bell-heather, green fir-fans,
And moorland mysteries and mountain hopes
That are no other man’s.

Praise give I freely to the mighty Queen
Who passes now in splendour and in state,
But ah!—my heart is hers whose shy, light eyes
And small, swift smile elate

Sealed me the servant of a cause forlorn,
Whose dream and whose desire I cannot tell,
Where timeless silence in the far blue hills
Hangs like a ready bell!”

MOUNTAIN MEASURE

LES HAUTES-PYRENEES,
June 1919.

AND now Aldebaran in the keen dawn dies,
Vega and Althair from the kindling zenith pass,
The valley mists
Blush and dislimn
And ancient peaks like fabulous statues stand,
Shining like roses and athrill with song,
Where morning burns them with apotheosis.

Breastplate of Judgment, here
The planes of man-wrought fields
The sapphire and the agate are,
Jasper and beryl, and their glory shines
Like living rainbows hung about
Th' imponderable mystery of the graven world!

The barrier vast and inoppugnable,
Ordained to give
Through all the guessless course of time
Difference to man,—
To set 'twixt eye and equal eye
Commensurate spaces as 'twixt star and star,
Convert like blood
To currents that contend incessantly,
And sever tongue and tongue in pentecosts perpetual,—

Lifts sheerly in the staring light
To the unknowledgeable skies
Bastions of ivory and jet,
Vivid with ice and black with antique fire,
That have withstood the whirling suns and storms
Of countless centuries
Whereunto they were vibrant cymbals once,

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Instant with black and scarlet chords,
Frenzying the stars.

And all man's thoughts are but as winds
That in the valleys still
Spin gravel!

TO A FRENCH GIRL FRIEND

CIRQUE DE GAVARNIE,
LES HAUTES-PYRENEES,
June 1919.

YOU named the mountains in your eager way,
Singling each cloud-bound peak along the chain,
As if you called them and they came to you
And knew your hand upon their heads again,
And I, the stranger, who had been afraid,
Was taken into friendship too.

And in the unfamiliar fields you lifted up
The blue face of a flower, and then the red,
And I, who else had passed with lonely eyes,
Saw sudden welcome through the grasses spread,
Returning gaily between blade and blade
Greetings that glittered starrywise!

BEYOND EXILE

PRAISE God that still my feet can find
In distant lands the old hill-road,
And tread always no alien clay
But their familiar sod.

And all the ocean's broad estate
Be but a gleaming band to me
That slips between the bending fields
To find no foreign sea.

No stranger's roof-tree covers me,
Albeit I travel far and wide,
And sundering leagues but closer bind
Me to my darling's side.

And if I pass the utmost bourne
Why, then, I shall be home again—
The quick step at the quiet door,
The gay eyes at the pane!

SALONIKA,
1916.

TO M. G.

W HETHER you are fairy or flesh
I may now know never.
A shimmer of rose in my eyes
And a song in my ears for ever,
You and the haze of my dreams
I cannot dissever.

With a rattle and whirl of drums
You carry the heart of me,
Or lure me with elfin pipes
The ends of the world to see,—
In batlight and noonday blaze
My mistress and mystery!

JOSEPH LEE

GERMAN PRISONERS—THE GREEN GRASS—THE
BROKEN HEART—THE PENITENT—THE WHITE-
WASHIN' O' ROBBIE BURNS—THE BURIAL O' THE
BAIRN—THE DRUM

GERMAN PRISONERS

from "Workaday Warriors"

WHEN first I saw you in the curious street,
Like some platoon of soldier ghosts in grey,
My mad impulse was all to smite and slay,
To spit upon you—tread you 'neath my feet.
But when I saw how each sad soul did greet
My gaze with no sign of defiant frown,
How from tired eyes looked spirits broken down,
How each face showed the pale flag of defeat,
And doubt, despair, and disillusionment,
And how were grievous wounds on many a head,
And on your garb red-faced was other red;
And how you stooped as men whose strength was spent,
I knew that we had suffered each as other,
And could have grasped your hand and cried, "My brother."

THE GREEN GRASS

from "Ballads of Battle"

THE dead spake together last night,
And one to the other said:
"Why are we dead?"

They turned them face to face about
In the place where they were laid:
"Why are we dead?"

"This is the sweet, sweet month o' May,
And the grass is green o'erhead—
Why are we dead?"

"The grass grows green on the long, long tracks
That I shall never tread—
Why are we dead?"

"The lamp shines like the glow-worm spark,
From the bield where I was bred—
Why am I dead?"

The other spake: "I've wife and weans,
Yet I lie in this waesome bed—
Why am I dead?"

"Oh, I hae wife and weans at hame,
And they clamour loud for bread—
Why am I dead?"

Quoth the first: "I have a sweet, sweet heart,
And this night we should hae wed—
Why am I dead?"

"And I can see another man
Will mate her in my stead,
Now I am dead."

They turned them back to back about
In the grave where they were laid:—
"Why are we dead?"

JOSEPH LEE

“ I mind o’ a field, a foughten field,
Where the bluid ran routh and red—
Now I am dead.”

“ I mind o’ a field, a stricken field,
And a waeful wound that bled—
Now I am dead.”

They turned them on their backs again,
As when their souls had sped,
And nothing further said.

.
The dead spake together last night,
And each to the other said,
“ *Why are we dead?*”

THE BROKEN HEART

from "Ballads of Battle"

I FOUND a silver sixpence,
A sixpence, a sixpence,
I found a silver sixpence,
And I break it in twa;
I gied it till a sodger,
A sodger, a sodger,
I gied it till a sodger,
Before he gaed awa'.

I have a heart that's broken,
That's broken, that's broken;
I bear a heart that's broken,
That's broken in twa—
For I gied it till a sodger,
A sodger, a sodger,
I gied it till a sodger,
Before he gaed awa'!

THE PENITENT

from "Ballads of Battle"

AS I lay in the trenches at Noove Chapelle,
Where the big guns barked like the hounds o' Hell,
Sez I to mysel', sez I to mysel':—

Billy, me boy, here's the end o' you—
But if, by good luck, ye should chance to slip thro',
Ye maun bid all yer evil companions adieu;
Keep the Lord's ten Commands—and Lord Kitchener's
two—

Sez I to mysel'—at Noove Chapelle.

No more women, and no more wine,
No more hedgin' to get down the line,
No more hoggin' around like a swine,
After Noove Chapelle—sez I to mysel'.

But only the good God in Heaven knows
The wayward way that a soldier goes,
And He must ha' left me to walk by mysel'—
For three times I've fell, since Noove Chapelle.

Once at Bethune and twice at Estaires,
The divil gripped hould o' me unawares—
Yet often and often I've prayed me prayers,
Since I prayed by mysel', at Noove Chapelle.

Well the Lord above, who fashioned the French,
May bethink how bewitchin' is wine and a wench
To a chap that's been tied for three weeks to a trench,
Around Noove Chapelle—that black bordero' Hell.

And me throat was dry and the night was damp,
And the rum was raw—and red was the lamp!—
And—Billy, me boy, ye'r a bit o' a scamp,
That's the truth to tell—tho' I sez it mysel'.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

What's worritin' me isn't fear that they'll miss
Me out o' the ranks in the realms o' bliss;
It's no hope o' Heaven, nor horror o' Hell,
But just breakin' the promise, 'twixt God and mysel',
 Made at Noove Chapelle.

Well, there's always a way that is open to men
When they gets the knock-out—that's get up again;
And sure now, ould Satan ain't yet counted ten!
I'm game for another good bout wi' mysel'—
 As at Noove Chapelle.

THE WHITE-WASHIN' O' ROBBIE BURNS

from "Tales o' our Town"

YESTREEN I sauntered round the Square,
The statues four were standing there—
Ye ken them weel—
Kinloch, Carmichael, and the Queen,
And Rab (wi's big, uplifted een),
In bronze—by Steele!

Wi' parted lips, but cold and dumb,
He sits amid the city's hum,
Aside the street;
Yet oft we notice, as we pass,
The modest daisy in the grass
Spring at his feet.

And nigh, the fairy fountain, leaping,
Mounting and murmuring, and weeping,
Sings in our ears,
Like Lugar low, or bonnie Doon—
Perchance the same old, sad, sweet tune
The poet hears.

But yesterday—I stood and gazed
Upon the monument amazed
At what I saw:
For three loons, arm'd wi' brush an' mop,
And soda, scouge, and guid saft soap,
Scrubbit awa'!

Ane wi' his tongue hung frae his jaw,
And wi' a dish-clout in his paw,
Rubb'd at the scroll,
As aff the schlate he wish't to clean
A'thing that might be thought obscene
Or ower droll!

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Ane wi' a red and raggit shred
Was dustin' doon that noble head—
 That head of gold;
Ane washed—what is't the scribblers say?—
Ane washed the Poet's "feet of clay"—
 O critics cold!
Wad they but mind that he—as they—
 Was made frae mold!

His faults? His sins? Who is't will cry—
"This man walk'd straight, this went awry,"
 And cast the stone?
The Potter fashioning the clay,
Of fair or foul 'tis He can say—
 And He alone.

Religions of a thousand rules,
And Churchman's creed, and scheme of schools
 Of ponderous plan!
His but the free unfetter'd mind—
His creed was only to be kind
 To mouse or man!

Behold me ower the railing leanin'
To watch this whimsical spring-cleanin'
 O' our great poet;
Thocht I, "Man, Rab, this is a ploy
That ye wad unco weel enjoy
 Could ye but know it!"

Just then in's een gaed sowp o' soap—
I saw them shut—I saw them ope—
 And syne his mouth—
"It weel may be, lads, that I'm dry,
But put na liquor in my eye
 To quench my drouth!

"Look! Ower yonder's an hotel—
Oh ay, there's water i' the well

JOSEPH LEE

And in your pail;
But backward dae I flee in fancy
To thae wild nichts whan Poussie Nancy
Sell't reamin' ale!"

I thocht to see the men look baffled,
Or even tum'le aff their scaffold,
But feint a bit!
As tho' they neither heard nor saw,
They dusted, dighted, douched awa'
Frae head to fit.

Rab turned to me, "What's a' this fash?
Ah! but I see—aince mair—whitewash!"
Said he, richt sadly.
"Weel, weel, wi' a' the steer an' skurry,
They've made frae Henley back to Currie
I'se need it badly."

Thocht I, "Whan buried an' forgotten
Lie a' the critics e'er begotten,
Thou shalt not die;
Tho' on thy head the dust of ages,
Nae dust shall gather on thy pages"—
Rab heaved a sigh.

Said he, "In sunshine smile I'd bask'd,
But when for only bread I asked—
Behold a stone!
I knew the quick averted glance,
The upcurl'd lip, the look askance—
I walked alone.

"But aye repaid them sneer for sneer—
Ourselves alone can harm us here—
Ah, there's the rub!
My heart beat high, my blood leap'd wild,
And oft my straying feet were filed
In drift and dub.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

“Oh, what avails the years we see—
Or thirty-seven or seventy-three,
 Whan ends the story?
Some dee as tho’ they’d never been livin’—
Too cauld for Hell, too hot for Heaven,
 Or Purgatory!

“The Power alone that formed me—man—
Can say how far I marred the plan,
 But d’ye ken?
Mayhap had I ne’er gaen awrong
Not half sae sure had sped my song
 ’Mang sinfu’ men.”
 (Quoth I, “Amen!”)

Rab glanced around, “It wad appear
Ye’ve progressed some this hundert year—
 The world seems waking.
But still are fearsome foes for fighting,
Still are there wrongs that wait for righting,
 Man’s i’ the making.

“Still curb’d by clerics, courtiers, kings;
Still Dives unto Lazarus flings
 A dole of crumbs;
But yet that day of which I spake
Draws nearer—Thou may see it break!
 It comes! It comes!

“Farewell!” Rab nothing further said,
But raised to heaven once more his head—
 It might hae seem’d—
But for that twinkle o’ his e’e,
But for the words he held wi’ me,
But that the hour was only three!—
 That I had dream’d!

[Perhaps I owe something in the nature of an apology to the three respectable and capable-looking workmen whom I found at work on the Burns Statue, for the various liberties I have taken with them.]

THE BURIAL O' THE BAIRN

hitherto unpublished

*" . . . a little grave,
A little, little grave, an obscure grave."*

HE sat within the dingy room,
And heard the parson pray;
But his heavy leaden eyes were fixed
On the coffin lid alway.

He sat within the dreary room,
The while the parson read
"The Resurrection and the Life"—
He only mourned the dead.

"Where is thy Victory, O Grave?
O Death, where is thy Sting?"—
Within his heart he felt the smart
Of the cruel barbèd thing.

"Behold thy daughter is not dead!
Behold thy brother sleeps!"
His heavy, hungry, leaden eyes
On the coffin lid he keeps.

His heavy leaden eyes are fixed
Upon the coffin lid,
And on the fair frail form beneath
Refuses to be hid.

He hears the beat of horses' hoofs,
The grind of carriage wheels;
His spirit stands rebellious up
The while his body kneels.

He clasps the coffin in his arms,
And bears it to the door;
Its head rests on his bowed shoulder
As hers so oft before!

NORTHERN NUMBERS

He clasps the coffin in his arms,
And bears it down the stair,
He seems to feel, beneath the deal,
Caressings of her hair!

He bears it through the narrow close,
Where waits the expectant throng,
And "Here *it* comes," the children cry,
That she had played among.

He crouches in the mourning coach,
The coffin on his knees,
And gazes through the sombre lid
To what beneath he sees.

He crouches in the mourning car,
The coffin in his arm,
As he would save that precious load
From that last deadly harm.

He crouches in the mourning coach,
He and his brother Ned,
And the two boys who sit ashamed
That tears they cannot shed.

For that they take a strange delight
As through the streets they ride,
In gazing on the curious world
That passes by outside.

And Uncle Ned attempts to talk,
Even tries a humble jest,
And longing feels the well-loved pipe
That lies within his vest.

The father sits within the coach,
The coffin on his knees,
And gazes through the sombre lid
To what beneath he sees.

JOSEPH LEE

And all the while the coach rolls on
Relentlessly as fate;
Until they reach the burying-place,
And turn in by the gate.

He hears the grinding, girding wheel
Upon the gravel path.
It stops.—The time has come to yield
The little that he hath.

He clasps the coffin in his arms
And bears it to the place;
He seems to feel upon his cheek
The softness of her face.

He bears it where the red soil shows
The gulf within the ground;
The heavy-booted men stand back,
The mourners stand around.

One at the head, one at the foot,
And one at either side,
And in the midst of them is set
The little one that died.

“The Lord gave, and the Lord has ta’en,
Now blessed be the Lord”;
They lower in that snow-white life,
Each with a snow-white cord.

A little way it goeth down,
This bed where she shall sleep,
And yet to him who stands above
It seems abysmal deep.

The earth falls on the coffin lid
Like to a summer rain,
And even so it smites his heart
To loneliness and pain.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

The earth drops on the coffin lid
Like to a thunder show'r;
A dead heart and a living heart
Are buried in that hour.

And now these heavy-booted men
A fitting grave have made,
They tread it gently with their feet
And tap it with their spade.
"Sure, but she was a little one,"
One to the other said.

* * * * *

The rain comes down upon the earth,
The clouds above are whirled,
Below a little dust goes back
To the dust of all the world.

THE DRUM

from "Ballads of Battle"

Come to me and I will give you flesh." —OLD PIBROCHADH

COME!
Says the drum;
Though graves be hollow,
Yet follow, follow:

Come!
Says the drum.

Life!
Shrills the fife,
Is in strife—
Leave love and wife:

Come!
Says the drum.

Ripe!
Screams the pipe,
Is the field—
Swords and not sickles wield:

Come!
Says the drum.

The drum
Says, Come!
Though graves be hollow,
Yet, follow, follow:

Come!
Says the drum.

JOHN FERGUSON

ON HEARING CHOPIN'S "MARCHE FUNÈBRE"—TO DAVID
GRAY—ON A CHORUS-GIRL—"RESTING"—MISERRIMA—
ON A GYMNASTIC CONTORTIONIST—ON A LOW COMEDIAN
—SMITH: BANK ACCOUNTANT—ON A REPRESENTATION
OF "OTHELLO"—"THYREA": SONNET—"THYREA": SON-
NET—"THYREA": "ON TOUR"

ON HEARING CHOPIN'S "MARCHE FUNÈBRE"

VLADIMIR DE PACHMANN

THE pulse of Grief beats through these quivering
 strains,

And the all-conscious keys are fraught with drear
And wizard echoes from those shadow-plains

Where mortals journey, and return not here:

Chopin! What dole was at thy spirit's core,

What sainted sorrow, what enthroned despair,

What cup of woe was emptied of its store

When thou didst thus thy painèd soul lay bare?

The marbles sleep. And yet those strains divine

Haunt me, and fill me with a vague unrest;

Somewhat of sadness lingers in my breast,

Somewhat of mist still dims my tearless eyne:

O God! This wild and wayward spirit of mine

A little space hath been supremely blest.

TO DAVID GRAY

AUTHOR OF "THE LUGGIE"

OTHERS have poured forth loftier strains than thine,
And Fame has placed her laurels on their brow:
Not Shakespeare's vision, Shelley's flush of wine,
Nor Milton's organ-voice thou hadst; but thou
Didst sob thy soul in sorrow through the years,
And swan-like, sang'st thyself to Lethe's wave;
And obstinate Fame, that spurned thy passionate tears,
Reluctant laid her wreath upon thy grave.

But while the fern-fringed Luggie flows along,
And Bothlin sings herself into the sea;
While lovers stray Glenconner's glooms among,
And storied Night holds Merkland's dreams in fee,
Fragrant thy memory, and thy star shall be
Luminous among the lesser orbs of song.

ON A CHORUS-GIRL

WITH half a score of singing girls she swings
Down the bright stage; sustains a rigid pose,
Toe-dances till her carmine beauty glows,
Then trips into the darkness of the wings:
Changes her dress; and while some "starlet" sings,
Into the footlights' glare again she goes,
Creeps on all fours, and dances on her toes . . .
Her rouged companions do the self-same things.

Twice nightly thus, for thirty bob a week!
No high Ambition swells her kindly heart,
No splendid rôle she craves, no brainy part,
Yet Hope burns where those spangly sequins shine;
Hope that to her may come the chance to speak—
The envied chance to speak the envied line.

“RESTING”

I MET her at the top of Catherine Street,
A pale-faced girl in her pathetic “best,”
She told me how dead weary was her quest,
And how the “Actors’ Mile” was each day’s beat
From ten to five. She had been “out” since May,
Her “panto” savings now were well-nigh spent
On callous agents and the weekly rent
Of her third-floor “combined” out Brixton way.

She was a “small-part woman” in the “Smalls,”
In Town she “supered” and would just “walk on,”
A rouged and spangled creature gaily dressed—
Now “shops” were scarce at theatres and halls,
And she was “resting,” sore dismayed and lone—
The resting that has not the gift of rest.

MISERRIMA

HAEC IN TERRA MISERRIMA COELUM INIIT

A FAIR-HAIRED harlot on a city street—
Her purple sunshade smutched with sludge and
rain,

Her coloured dress all draggled at the train,
And worn the shoes upon her tired feet—
I saw her creep from out the policeman's beat,
And, shunning sight, slink down a choking lane;
Starveling she looked, as if the hunger-pain
Had made her tawdry wretchedness complete.

Now she is dead, poor Child; and now to-night—
Forgotten pious spleen and cruel jest,
The scornful brow, Propriety's cold stare—
I see her sleeping in the land of light,
Soft-pillowed on the Magdalene's breast,
And no Reproach nor any pain is there.

ON A GYMNASTIC CONTORTIONIST

HE makes his entrance on his hands and knees,
His pliant backbone like Diana's bow,
And snake-like glistening in the limelight's glow,
He coils his tinselled limbs by slow degrees;
Turning a "cartwheel," he assumes with ease
A froggish shape, and bounces to and fro,
Hand-climbs a ladder, and concludes his show
With sinuous twistings on a high trapeze.

Twice every evening for his scanty "screw"
He coils his limbs and stretches tendon and thew,
And climbs the ladder rung by difficult rung;
No proud theatric crown he strives to gain,
Content and happy could he but remain
For ever lithe, if not for ever young.

ON A LOW COMEDIAN

THE index changes; up his number goes;
The lights are lowered and the "rag" divides;
In motley costume from the wings he strides,
With blue and scarlet face and luminous nose;
He hobbles round, strikes an eccentric pose,
Leans on his stick and croaks a few "asides,"
Then sings a song about his former brides,
A jingle of his matrimonial woes.

His "biz." and "cackle" done he gets a "round,"
Balloons a bit and exits in a bound,
The tickled gods chorus his song the while. . . .
And from His holy house beyond the skies
Methinks the Christ looks down with loving eyes
Whene'er He sees His toil-worn children smile.

SMITH—BANK ACCOUNTANT

R.I.P.

POOR Smith! He taught me how to write the "State,"
And post the Ledger; and with sedulous care
He led me step by step, and eke would share
My clerkly sorrows at each change of rate;
His kindly censure when I came in late,
His lucid answer to each "Please explain,"
I seem to hear and read; and once again
I stand beside him at the office gate.

So farewell, Smith. The Cash is put away,
The Ledger balanced and the "State" surveyed,
And all the wrong endorsements guaranteed.
From dusty desk-work is his spirit freed,
And in Head Office he appears to-day
Before The Chief Inspector undismayed.

ON A REPRESENTATION OF "OTHELLO"

ACT III. SCENE III.

THE intrigue has triumphed; it is too, too late;
The proofs are vouched for. Now I see thee stand
Like an august Colossus, dark and grand,
onting the onset of disastrous fate:
vells thy black bosom with its desperate freight,
Lean the ripe fruits of vengeance toward thy hand,
Now must thou pluck;—dead the fond schemes love
planned,
nd all that flower-soft love is tyrannous hate.

ow is the chainèd beast in man set free,
Thine now the thirst blood only may assuage;
In purple of passion—fury of frenzied rage,
thou deluded Moor, I bow to thee
ho, in this hour of culminant agony,
Gasp'st inarticulate upon the stage.

FROM "THYREA"

a Sonnet Sequence from a Sanatorium *

I

HE caught a chill in Leicester, he came here;—
He came here with his little store of gold,
To this grim dwelling, bare, and clean, and cold,
Where life joins hands with death, and hope with fear:
He told us how in Leicester's city drear,
On coughing slightly, down his garments rolled
The warm and scarlet flood; and oft he told
How softly he would tread from year to year.

His wife came for him, and he left to-day
Because his little store of gold was done;
My God! I knew not gold and life were one
Till he shook hands with us and went away:
His limbs all fever-thinned, and hope all gone—
O Christ in Heaven, how he longed to stay!

* First published in 1918 (with a Foreword by W. L. Courtney, LL.D.)
"Thyrea" has since run into more editions than any other volume of distinguished modern verse.

FROM "THYREA"

a Sonnet Sequence from a Sanatorium

II

THERE was a shuffling of strange feet last night
Along the naked corridor of stone;
Dull creakings, and much talk in undertone
In the next room to mine: Death's chill and blight
Lay on my brother, who, though screened from sight,
Was by his ominous cough endeared and known;
And I, all wakeful in my chamber lone,
Quailed in the deathful dark, and longed for light.

O God, that some should stumble by the way!
They do not like us dying here, we know,
They talk about the credit of the place—
The Doctor, when he sounded me to-day,
Said never a word about last night; and lo,
Her customed smile lights up the Nurse's face.

FROM "THYREA"

a Sonnet Sequence from a Sanatorium

III

"ON TOUR"

S LIGHTLY deformed, he filled a sort of gap,
Serving the chief buffoon as foil and butt,
And drollish were the capers that he cut,
And wry his features when he "took the nap";
He carried on, through good and evil hap,
Till Tuesday last, when, resting "on the side,"
He coughed a bit, and lo! the arterial tide,
Crimson and warm, incarnadined his lap.

I saw him in his little room to-night,
Saw the dew'd temples and the sunken cheek,
And *knew* the shadow of death was stealing on. . . .
He told me he had fixed it up all right
To join the troupe at Wigan, Monday week,
Or Monday fortnight *sure* at Warrington.

ANDREW GRAHAM GRIEVE

JUNE MEMORY—DEATH

JUNE MEMORY

IN a green delightful place
Where the slim boughs interlace
And the shadows skip and chase
Elfin-wise across the sward,
Oh, in bright-eyed harmony
Sings a friendly little bird
Privately to me.

Sings in freshly-springing tune
How one night in midmost June
Underneath a sickle moon
Cupid shot a feathered dart,
Twanging like a fairy's sigh
Straightly at his open heart
Through the hushing sky.

Tells then, honest little bird,
How to wildering wildness stirred
Singing till the heavens heard
All his ache he eased in song.
Now the self-same remedy
Sends my sorrows up along
In quick songs from me!

DEATH

I KNOW that in some tender flushing dawn
Swift speeding to me from life's busier seas
A ship will ride all gracely as a swan
With silken sails that glimmer on the breeze
When you, my love, adventure smilingly
Beneath the arches of eternity.

DONALD A. MACKENZIE *

ISLE OF MY HEART—THE TINKER'S BABY—THE
ISLAND MAID'S LAMENT—FREE WILL—THE SONG
OF THE BANNOCK—THE BANSHEE—THE BLUE
MEN OF THE MINCH—THE HOLY WELL

* Donald A. Mackenzie, Edinburgh, is a native of Cromarty and a descendant of the eighteenth-century Gaelic bard, Rob Donn. He has drawn his inspiration mainly from Gaelic folk-life and literature. The impressionable years of his youth were spent in Argyllshire. He is the author of two books of verse, *The Riddle of Life* and *Elves and Heroes*, and a number of volumes in prose, dealing with the archæology and religious beliefs of ancient civilisations, including *Wonder Tales from Scottish Myth and Legend*, *Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe*, *Myths of Babylonia and Assyria*, *Egyptian Myth and Legend*, *Indian Myth and Legend*, etc. He has done a great deal of folk-lore collecting in the Lowlands and Highlands.

ISLE OF MY HEART

I'M sighing here my lone-self
In a foreign land and fair,
Where the sun is ever gleaming
And I can live at ease;
For it's me that will be dreaming
Of the dear days that were,
On that jewel of an island
In the sweet Hebrides.

The little island of my heart,
Ah! cold it is and bare,
It's bleak wi' rain and black wi' peat
And hungry in the foam;
But oh! it's heartsome and it's sweet,
It's me that would be there,
For they're good folk, they're warm folk,
They're fine folk at home.

I'm wondering if my mother
Will be sitting by her door,
With her spinning-wheel at even
That's humming like the bee—
She'll be bent and grey with grieving
O'er the dear days of yore,
And her old heart will be hungry
For her sons across the sea.

My father will be growing frail
With delving in the croft—
I mind well the sweet smell
New broken from the land;—
A blackbird pipes above the well,
And eve is falling soft:
He'll be old and worn wi' working,
Like the spade that's in his hand.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

It's a poor land, a dour land,
A hard land and cold,
The young grow weary of its yoke
And east and west they roam.
There's little left for poor folk
When they'll be growing old,
But it's near to me and dear to me,
That island of my home.

THE TINKER'S BABY

THE poet, wand'ring on the moor,
Came to a camp of tinkers poor,
And saw upon the heather laid
A baby cradled in a plaid.

Low burned the fire; the wind was cold;
The baby but a few hours old,
Washed by the tinker in a stream,
Was slumbering in a golden dream.

'Twas strange to think that spark of life,
Low flick'ring, could withstand the strife
Which stricken warriors wage for breath
When taken in the loops of death. . . .

That frail life, like a daisy sweet
At mercy of all passing feet,
Of with'ring sun and blighting storm,
With loveliness of hue and form. . . .

That life mysterious and strange,
Made captive in this world of change,
Beginning, as all lives begin,
Unstained by folly or by sin. . . .

That life immune to love and hate,
Indifferent to death and fate,
Knowing nor hope, nor fear, nor care,
Mute, unresponsive, unaware. . . .

That life unsought and incomplete,
That wonder lying at his feet,
Which yet could make its sure appeal
Entrancing through the senses steal,
Like to a sweet, alluring ditty
Which fills the heart with love and pity. . . .

The poet pondered, sighing oft,
Then smiled; for smiled in slumber soft
That babe, so beautiful, so pure—
A rosebud wild upon the moor.

THE ISLAND MAID'S LAMENT

WHITE bird of the ocean,
With lovelorn emotion,
I follow thy flight o'er
The grey silver sea.
For the soul of me sighing,
Would like thee be flying
To where in the seafold
My love calls for me.

O Angus, mine own love,
My lost love, my lone love,
Unresting as restless
Dumb waves of the deep,
Ah! would I were near thee,
To comfort and cheer thee,
Then soft would thy dreams be
And gentle thy sleep.

Yon dew-mists that creep o'er
Wan seaway and dimmed shore,
Seem wraiths from the death-cold
Doom-deeps of the sea.
Or asleep, or awoken,
I mourn thee forsaken—
Fair soul from the sea-fold
Aye calling for me.

FREE WILL

SAY not the will of man is free
Within the limits of his soul—
Who from his heritage can flee?
Who can his destiny control?

In vain we wage perpetual strife
'Gainst instincts dumb and blind desires—
Who leads must serve. The pulse of life
Throbs with the dictates of our sires.

Since when the world began to be,
And life through hidden purpose came,
From sire to son unceasingly
The task bequeathed hath been the same.

We strive, while fetters bind us fast;
We seek to do what needs must be—
We move through bondage with the past
In service to posterity.

THE SONG OF THE BANNOCK

O H! the good-wife will be singing
When her meal is all but done:
“Now all my bannocks have I baked;
I’ve baked them all but one;
And I’ll dust the board to bake it,
I’ll bake it with a spell—
Oh! it’s Finlay’s little bannock
For going to the well.*
The bannock on the brander
Smells sweet for your desire—
Oh! my crisp ones I will count not
On two sides of the fire;
Ah! not a farl has fallen
Some evil to foretell—
Here’s Finlay’s little bannock
For going to the well.
The bread would not be lasting,
’T would crumble in your hand,
If fairies should be coming here
To turn the meal to sand.
But what will keep them dancing
In their own green dell?
Oh! it’s Finlay’s little bannock
For going to the well.
Now, not a fairy finger
Will do my baking harm—
The little bannock with the hole,
Oh! it will be the charm.
I’ll knead it, knead it, ’twixt my palms,†
And all the bairns I’ll tell,
Oh! it’s Finlay’s little bannock
For going to the well.”

* “Finlay’s little bannock” charmed the baking. It was given to a child for bringing water from a magic well. The charm was completed by the child’s service. Fairies took “the substance” from uncharmed bread.

† It must not be baked on the board. The children should not be told why it is baked, lest the charm be broken.

THE BANSHEE

KNEE-DEEP she waded in the pool—
The Banshee robed in green:
Singing her song the whole night long,
She washed the linen clean;
The linen that will wrap the dead
She beetled on a stone,
She washed with dripping hands, blood-red,
Low singing all alone:
*The Banshee I with second sight,
Singing in the cold starlight;
I wash the death-clothes pure and white,
For Fergus More must die to-night.*

'Twas Fergus More rode o'er the hill,
Come back from foreign wars;
His horse's feet were clattering sweet
Below the pitiless stars;
And in his heart he'd oft repeat:
"Oh, never again I'll roam;
All weary is the going forth,
But sweet the coming home."
*The Banshee I with second sight,
Singing in the cold starlight;
I wash the death-clothes pure and white,
For Fergus More must die to-night.*

He saw the blaze upon his hearth
Bright gleaming down the glen.
Oh! he was fain for home again!—
He'd parted with his men.
"'Tis many a weary day," he'd sigh,
"Since I did leave her side;
I'll never more leave Scotland's shore,
And Una Ban, my bride."
*The Banshee I with second sight,
Singing in the cold starlight;
I wash the death-clothes pure and white,
For Fergus More must die to-night.*

NORTHERN NUMBERS

At thought of Una's tender love,
Soft tears his eyes did blind . . .
Then up there crept and swiftly leapt
A man who stabbed behind.
"Tis you," he cried, "who stole my bride—
This night shall be your last!" . . .
As Fergus fell, the warm, red tide
Of life came ebbing fast.

*The Banshee I with second sight,
Singing in the cold starlight;
I wash the death-clothes pure and white,
For Fergus More must die to-night.*

THE BLUE MEN OF THE MINCH

WHEN the tide is at the turning, and the wind is fast
asleep,
And not a wave is curling on the wide, blue deep,
Oh! the waters will be churning in the stream that never
smiles,
Where the Blue Men are splashing round the charmed
isles.*

As the summer wind goes droning o'er the sun-bright seas,
And the Minch is all a-dazzle to the Hebrides,
They will skim along like salmon — you can see their
shoulders gleam,
And the flashing of their fingers in the Blue Men's Stream.

But when the blast is raving and the wild tide races,
The Blue Men are breast-high with foam-grey faces;
They'll plunge along with fury while they sweep the spray
behind:
Oh! they'll bellow o'er the billows and wail upon the wind.

And if my boat be storm-tossed and beating for the bay,
They'll be howling and be growling as they drench it with
their spray—
For they'd like to heel it over to their laughter when it lists,
Or crack the keel between them, or stave it with their fists.

Oh! weary on the Blue Men, their anger and their wiles!
The whole day long, the whole night long, they're splash-
ing round the isles;
They'll follow every fisher—ah! they'll haunt the fisher's
dream—
When billows toss, oh! who would cross the Blue Men's
Stream!

* The "Blue Men" (*Na Fir Ghorm*) are storm-fairies of the sea. They haunt the "Stream of the Blue Men" (*Sruth nam Fear Gorm*) between Lewis and the Shant Isles (*Na h-Eileinean siant*, "the charmed isles"). This strait is restless even in calm weather.

THE HOLY WELL *

'TIS for thee I will be pining,
Tober Voorie!
Thou art deep and sweet and shining,
Tober Voorie!
In the dimness I'll be dying,
And my soul for thee is sighing
With the blessings on thee lying—
Tober Voorie!
Oh! thy cool, sweet waters dripping,
Tober Voorie!
Now my sere lips would be sipping,
Tober Voorie!
Oh! my lips are sere and burning,
For thy waters I'll be yearning
And yon road of no returning,
Tober Voorie!
Oh! thy coolness and thy sweetness,
Tober Voorie!
Oh! thy sureness and completeness,
Tober Voorie!
Oh! this life I will be leaving,
With the greyness of its grieving,
And the deeps of its deceiving—
Tober Voorie!
I shall sip thy waters holy,
Tober Voorie!
While the drops of life drip slowly,
Tober Voorie!
Till the wings of angel whiteness,
With their softness and their lightness,
Blind me, fold me in their brightness,
Tober Voorie!

* In Gaelic *Tober Mhuire* ("Well of St Mary"). It is situated at Tarradale, Ross and Cromarty. The request of a sick person for the well-water is regarded as an indication that death is near.

RODERICK WATSON KERR

THE MISSION—THE CORPSE—THE GRAVE-DIGGER
—FROM THE LINE—REBUKE—A MOOD

THE MISSION

from the "English Review"

'TIS dingy bright; a lady smirks and sings
In evening dress so rare and rich it brings
Down heaven to the poor—the poor that swarm
The Mission hall in filthy rags not warm
Enough for dogs. The lady's singing done,
She bows and flutters to her seat. "What fun
It is to sing in here!" she thinks. "Poor things,
They need some music in their lives; it brings
Such happiness you see!" Oh, Art for woe—
A one-time prima donna sits below,
Besmattered, bleary-eyed, in rags!

Around

Comes tea—philanthropy must know no bound—
And buns—weeks old, but oh, twopence the lot
How very cheap! Magnanimous, God wot!
Quite fit for gentle ladies' palates—God!
And monkeys in a cage get nuts; and, odd
Enough—oh, very odd!—the tea and buns
Just cost the soul of any of these ones—
The female things, I mean. Two pence? Ah, yes,
That woman's body sells each night for less.
(How very cheap indeed the buns and tea!)
But hark! The Preacher speaks: "Ah, friends, I see
Around, the evidence of sin and drink—
The evil things that lure you to the brink
Of hell; that urge your souls to sink bedamned.
Why, hell, my friends, is with the drunkards crammed.
Ah, look not on the wine when red and rosy;
Drink is raging, wine a mockery."
The Preacher finished, silence for a pause;
"Damn good!" a drunk man says—then loud applause.

.
Oh, Words! Oh, Song! Oh, Tea and Currant Buns!
Out flock the drab and outcast, hopeless ones

NORTHERN NUMBERS

To make for Home—for Home?—some fetid nest
In cracked, unwholesome tenements—Oh, Home!
A worm sleeps sweeter in its dungy loam—
(Father's drunk and mother is a bawd.
Oh, Words! Oh, Song! Oh, Tea and Buns—Oh, God!)

THE CORPSE

from "War Daubs." John Lane

IT lay on the hill
A sack on its face,
Collarless,
Stiff and still,
Its two feet bare,
And very white,
Its tunic tossed in sight
And not a button there—
Small trace
Of clothes upon its back—
Thank God! it had a sack
Upon its face!

THE GRAVE-DIGGER

from "War Daubs." John Lane

ADIGGER he digs in the dark,
In the naked remains of a wood,
For his friend that lies stiff and stark,
On his head hard blood for a hood:

The digging is painful and slow,
Yet the digger he sweats like a slave;
But he did not know what I now know:
The digger he dug his own grave.

FROM THE LINE

from "War Daubs." John Lane

HAVE you seen men come from the Line,
Tottering, doddering, as if bad wine
Had drugged their very souls;
Their garments rent with holes
And caked with mud
And streaked with blood

Of others, or their own;
Haggard, weary-limbed and chilled to the bone
Trudging aimless, hopeless on,
With listless eyes and faces drawn
Taut with woe?

Have you seem them aimless go
Bowed down with muddy pack
And muddy rifle slung on back,
And soaking overcoat,
Staring on with eyes that note
Nothing but the mire,
Quenched of every fire?

Have you seen men when they come
From shell-holes filled with scum
Of mud and blood and flesh,
Where there's nothing fresh,
Like grass, or trees, or flowers,
And the numbing year-like hours
Lag on—drag on;
And the hopeless dawn
Brings naught but death and rain—
The rain a fiend of pain
That scourges without end,
And death a smiling friend?

Have you seen men when they come from hell?
If not, ah well,

RODERICK WATSON KERR

Speak not with easy eloquence,
That seems like sense,
Of "War and its Necessity!"
And do not rant I pray
On "War's Magnificent Nobility!"

If you've seen men come from the Line
You'll know it's Peace that is divine!
If you've not seen the things I've sung,
Let silence bind your tongue,
But, make all wars to cease;
And work, and work, for Everlasting Peace!

REBUKE

from "War Daubs." John Lane

AS one who was rebuked I stood
In silence by the sea;
The stars were pale and faint—a brood
Of angel-eyes to me.

The dim red flush of evening lay
Like rose-leaves in the West,
And fishing-boats slept in the bay
Like weary birds at rest.

As one who was rebuked I stood
In wonder by the sea;
And in the beauty, lo! I could
Attain Serenity!

A MOOD

hitherto unpublished

I AM weary
Of the day,
The dreary
White of day;
I long for the night—
My tomb—
With stars to light
The gloom:

And the wind wailing through the leafless trees will
comfort me;
And my lullaby will be the black rain beating in the
night desolately.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

NORTHERN NUMBERS

BEING
REPRESENTATIVE SELECTIONS
FROM CERTAIN LIVING
SCOTTISH POETS

EDITED BY C. M. GRIEVE

SECOND SERIES

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FOREWORD

ELEVEN contributors were represented in the First Series of *Northern Numbers*, published in November 1920. Seven of these contribute again. Contributors for the first time are: General Sir Ian Hamilton, Sir Ronald Ross, the Rev. Lauchlan Maclean Watt, D.D., Dr Charles Murray, Professor Alexander Gray, Mrs Lindsay Carnegie of Annesley, Miss Agnes Falconer, Miss Isobel W. Hutchison, Miss Mary Symon and Messrs Lewis Spence and William Ogilvie—the last-mentioned not to be confused with our older friend and contributor, Mr Will H. Ogilvie. In several cases what are held by many to be the best poems of their authors are not included here (*e.g.* Lauchlan Maclean Watt's "Grey Mother," which already appears in no fewer than seventeen anthologies), preference being given to less well-known poems and, more particularly, to current work, and work not hitherto published in volume form.

These representative selections have for the most part been chosen by the contributors themselves—who, it may be remarked, now represent practically every district in Scotland, "including London."

I have to express my indebtedness to many editors and publishers for permission to include various poems in this volume.

C. M. G.

JOHN BUCHAN

THE GIPSY'S SONG TO THE LADY CASSILIS—THE WISE
YEARS—WOOD MAGIC

THE GIPSY'S SONG TO THE LADY CASSILIS

"Whereupon the Faas, coming down from the Gates of Galloway, did so bewitch my lady that she forgot husband and kin, and followed the tinkler's piping."—CHAP BOOK OF THE RAID OF CASSILIS.

THE door is open to the wall,
The air is bright and free;
Adown the stair, across the hall,
And then—the world and me;
The bare grey bent, the running stream,
The fire beside the shore;
And we will bid the hearth farewell,
And never seek it more,
My love,
And never seek it more.

And you shall wear no silken gown,
No maid shall bind your hair;
The yellow broom shall be your gem,
Your braid the heather rare.
Athwart the moor, adown the hill,
Across the world away,
The path is long for happy hearts
That sing to greet the day,
My love,
That sing to greet the day.

When morning cleaves the eastern grey,
And the lone hills are red;
When sunsets light the evening way
And birds are quieted;
In autumn noon and springtide dawn,
By hill and dale and sea,
The world shall sing its ancient song
Of hope and joy for thee,
My love,
Of hope and joy for thee.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

And at the last no solemn stole
 Shall on thy breast be laid;
No mumbling priest shall speed thy soul,
 No charnel-vault thee shade.
But by the shadowed hazel copse,
 Aneath the greenwood tree,
Where airs are soft and waters sing,
 Thou'lt ever sleep by me, . . .
 My love,
 Thou'lt ever sleep by me.

THE WISE YEARS

the monk, Lapidarius, in meditation

from "The Moon Endureth"

I, LAPIDARIUS, priest of the Most High
(Called, ere Christ sought me, John of Dinlay-burn),
Now in this shadowy twilight of my days
Give laud and make confession. Yester-eve
I cast lots in the Scriptures, for 'tis right,
As Austin teaches, thus to question God.
Twofold the answer: first I found the text,
"The hour is nigh," a token clear that soon
I must put off these tattered mortal weeds
And don the immortal raiment of the blest.
The second was the Psalm, that "to the just
Peace shall be granted while the moon endures."
A fitting benediction, quoth my soul;
For I have ever loved the moon and sought
The gentle love that dwelleth in her beams.

Here, in this moorland cell, long years I strove
To pierce the veil that parteth Heaven from man.
By fasts and vigils I wore thin the robe,
The fleshly robe that clogs the soul; in prayer
I from the body soared among the stars
And held high converse with the cherubim,
I moved in ecstasy, and all the land
Spake of my sainthood; people thronged from far
To gaze upon the man who walked with God.
Ah, little knew they! In my heart I wept,
For God was ever distant. Not with Him
I communed, but with fancies self-begot,
Half of sick brain and half of fevered flesh.
And then one eve—'twas at the Lammas-tide
When every twilight is a taste of Heaven,
While half-distraught I laboured, sudden came
The light that shone on Paul; I caught my breath,
Felt on my forehead the cool hand of God,

NORTHERN NUMBERS

And heard His holy accents in my ear:
"Why troublest thou thyself to mount to Me
When I am with thee always? Love My world,
The good green earth I gave thee for thy joy."
Then through the rushes flowered the rose of eve,
And I went forth into the dewy air,
And made my first communion with God's world.

The robe of flesh wears thin, and with the years
God shines through all things. Time and Death are not,
Nor Change, but all endures even as a tree
Bears in its secular trunk the rings of youth.
I walk by stream and hill, at even and dawn,
In noontide's height, in the first joy of spring,
Through the warm hours of summer, in the ripe
Soft fall of autumn, when the winter's spell
Has stilled the earth to sleep; and as I go
The dear unseen companions walk with me;
The birds and beasts attend me, and their speech,
Wise as the hills, hath opened mysteries.
I hold high fellowship with souls long dead
And souls unborn, for I am one with life,
One with the earth and almost one with God.
They name me saint no more. The Abbot scowls,
The brethren flee me, and the country folk
Call me the devil's minion. Soon, belike—
For God may will I reach Him through the fire—
They seek to burn me as a brand of hell.
All men have shunned me, but the children come
Stealthily on a holy day with flowers
Or autumn berries; from the hazel shade
They whisper, "Brother John, come play with us
And tell us stories of your fairy friends."
They know, whose hearts are pure, that mine is kind,
And erreth not in loving all God made.
They shall have comfort while the moon endures.

JOHN BUCHAN

The hour is nigh. Behind the wattled strip
Which screens my pallet, lo! the first grey light
Creeps timorous as a fawn. My limbs are moved
To a strange exaltation. . . . Soon the sun
Will steep the moorlands in a holier dawn,
And my thin veil of sense will fade and fall.
I shall be one with Him, and hear His speech,
As friend to friend, and see Him face to face.
He findeth God who finds the earth He made . . .
The Green Glen waits the morning, and I go.

WOOD MAGIC

I WILL walk warily in the wise woods on the fringes of
eventide,
For the covert is full of noises and the stir of nameless
things.

I have seen in the dusk of the beeches the shapes of the
lords that ride,

And down in the marish hollow I have heard the lady
who sings.

And once in an April gloaming I met a maid on the sward,
All marble-white and gleaming and tender and wild of
eye—

I, Jehan, the hunter, who speak, am a grown man, middling
hard,

But I dreamt a month of the maid, and wept I knew not
why.

Down by the edge of the firs, in a coppice of heath and
vine,

Is an old moss-grown altar, shaded by brier and bloom.

Denys, the priest, hath told me 'twas the lord Apollo's
shrine

In the days ere Christ came down from God to the
Virgin's womb.

I never go past but I doff my cap and avert my eyes—

(Were Denys to catch me I trow I'd do penance for half-
a-year)—

But once I saw a flame there and the smoke of a sacrifice,
And a voice spake out of the thicket that froze my soul
with fear.

Wherefore to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost,
Mary the Blessed Mother and the kindly Saints as well,
I will give glory and praise, and them I cherish the most,
For they have the keys of Heaven, and save the soul from
Hell.

JOHN BUCHAN

But likewise I will spare for the lord Apollo a grace,
And a bow for the lady Venus—as a friend but not as a
thrall.

'Tis true they are out of Heaven, but some day they may
win the place;

For gods are kittle cattle, and a wise man honours them
all.

AGNES LINDSAY CARNEGIE

TO SIR HARRY LAUDER

TO SIR HARRY LAUDER

Written in January 1917

BECAUSE we flock to hear you in your glory,
And "laughter holding both her sides" is thine,
Shall we not mourn that now your tragic story
Is marred and blotted in the last best line?
"The only son" in whom we know was centred
The love, the care, the work of many years,
He in his happy youth has greatly ventured,
For him—your soldier son—there are no fears!
Oh, King of Doric Laughter, take our sorrow—
Accept the sympathy that knows like pain,
And from the heart of Scotland may you borrow
The pride, the confidence which keeps us sane.

AGNES S. FALCONER

THE FOUR CUPS

THE FOUR CUPS

FOUR flagons grace the board of life,
With wondrous wines they brim;
Who sips thereof—who drinketh deep—
Shall know his senses swim.
And Two are made of beaten gold
And Two of silver dim.

Not every guest shall kiss the Cup
That holds the Wine of Fame;
The Master calls his chosen souls
And singles them by name.
There is little sweetness in the wine,
But it thrills like living flame.

The golden Cup of Love runs o'er
With mingled Sweet and Fire—
Fair fancies hover round the brim
And raptured dreams inspire;—
Some may but sip; some must forgo;
Some drink at their desire.

But Sorrow's silver chalice holds
A chill and dreary wine—
Oh, well for those who blend with this
A dearer draught divine,
Yet neither Love nor Fame may quench
Its taste of tears like brine.

Who drinks too deep of Sorrow's wine
May henceforth only know
The weariness and thirst that wait
The Fourth Cup's coming slow,
That every guest must drain at last
Ere he hath leave to go.

That Cup of Death—who drinks thereof
Forgets both Love and Fame,

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Who drinks thereof forgets the smart
That with his Sorrow came;—
No guest so favoured—none so low
But he shall drink the same.

I see, beneath the circled lights
That o'er the banquet burn,
That pallid-gleaming flagon pass
Which none escape nor spurn;—
The Feast's high Master sends it round
And all must drink in turn.

JOHN FERGUSON

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS—AT A PAWNBROKER'S
WINDOW — THE PROPERTY MAN — CHRIST AT
“ALADDIN”—AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM—THE
STAR LEAD

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS

SADDENED by dreams of what she might have been,
Sick with the thought of what she is to-day,
She droops, a little woman, pinched and grey,
Within the shadow of a painted scene;
till lingers on her weary face the sheen
Of make-believe; the cruel crow's-feet stray
Beneath her faded eyes, and mute dismay
Hurks in her timid and pathetic mien.

echoes of bygone triumphs wake her breast—
The nights of tinselled bliss, the dizzy whirl,
The sparkling gauds, the limelight and the band—
Now with a needle in her work-worn hand,
he potters round the wings, all drably drest,
Stitching the trappings of some thoughtless girl.

AT A PAWNBROKER'S WINDOW

LOITERING along the crowded thoroughfare
I paused before a window yesternight
Whose glittering range of gold, all gleaming bright
The sorrows of a thousand hearts laid bare;
The trinket and the pledge of love were there,
The wedding ring that sealed Love's dear delight,
The little cross with simple gems bedight,
The locket that had held a mother's hair.

O, eloquent of many a tragedy,
O, garish window in the sombre street,
Symbol of Sorrow's victory complete,
Telling of hapless lives in ruins that lie,
While ceaseless throngs, unheeding, pass thee by
Their own bright hopes pursuing with eager feet.

THE PROPERTY MAN

UNBILLED, unnamed, he never gets a "hand,"
He never "takes the curtain," though he plays
The augustest part of all, and nightly sways
A rod more potent than a wizard's wand;
Cities as magic-fair as Samarcand,
He summons forth to front the footlights' blaze;
His Jove-like nod the hurricane obeys,
And the long thunder leaps at his command.

Custodian of treasure without end,
Impartial arbiter of woe and weal,
Bidding the joy-bells chime, the requiem toll . . .
He doffs his sceptre when the "tabs" descend,
And hurries homeward to a midnight meal—
A mug of porter and a sausage-roll.

CHRIST AT "ALADDIN"

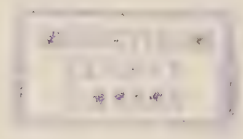
THE house is crammed, the overture is done;
The curtain rises o'er the lowered lights;
Across the stage swing troops of tinsel sprites,
And round and round the comic policemen run:
The Widow Twankey dances with her son
The debonair Aladdin, brave in tights;
Within the magic cave what dazzling sights,
And in the enchanted palace, oh, what fun!

The childish flotsam of the neighbouring streets,
Long breathless wondering, from the topmost seats
Sends sudden laughter rippling through the air;
O marred yet merry little ones, I know,
The Christ Who smiled on children long ago,
Himself hath entered by the gallery stair.

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM

THEY call Him the Good Shepherd and the Lamb,
The Rose, the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel;
And yet, half-vaunting, of His vengeance tell
All who traffic in deceit or sham;
They boast much knowledge of the dread I AM,
And babble of a Book whose pages swell
With record of men's faults since Adam fell—
Say, He inscribeth every muttered "Damn."

They have not seen the Lord who tell such things,
They have not touched His garment in the throng,
The foolish folk who know not what they say . . .
No book of doom is hid beneath His wings,
And when men stumble in blind paths of wrong
How often doth He look the other way!



THE STAR LEAD

THE theatre is crowded, and the air
Heavy with perspiration, thick with smoke;
The hushful stage is held by augurous folk,
Momentous and dread things are happening there:
The hired assassin leaves his hidden lair,
The hero writhes beneath the tyrant's yoke,
The unctuous villain stalks in inky cloak,
And the blanched heroine wrings her hands in pray

The heroine is saved, the villain dies,
The hired assassin meets a gory fate,
Virtue sits thronèd, and the gods rejoice:
The hero broadens his phylacteries,
Ruffling with stagey swagger in his gait,
And twenty years of touring in his voice.

MABEL CHRISTIAN FORBES

THE ROSELEAF AND THE RECLUSE (SAID SHE)—
THE FOLD

THE ROSELEAF AND THE RECLUSE (SAID SHE)

"I AM
Wor-ship,"
He said.

"And—what do you want?"

Askt she.

"Nothing—except To Be."

"I am Love,"

He said to her.

She—

"Do you still want

Nothing?"

She said.

"Nay—all!

But I ask for

Nothing,"

Said he.

"Come to me, love!" he sang.

"I am bold with desire," sang he.

"There is nothing I fear,

—There is nothing to fear!"

Sang he.

"Say me not nay!" he cried.

"I suffer, and knowing how poor I am—

And when you answer me, cool and far,

Cool and far—

My shame and my pain are bitter to bear,

Are hard to bear.

And strange . . . and shy . . . that you come not nigh——"

"What do you lack?" quoth she—

"Nothing—except to be?"

"I lack for nothing," he said:

"You are Peace and Bidding and Blessing to me.

Be as you are—No more!"

Said he.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

"O, I am so little," she cried.

*—"A shower of tears on a desert-land,
A roseleaf crumpled to shade a world,
A wallet of coppers to ransom a king,
A quivering note in a scorning heaven—
And you say, 'Be content—be content' . . .
I would liefer not be, not be."*

THE FOLD

Written to a sheep-dog

WEARILY the mist trails low, and white
Over the wet sky.
You can hear the burns are sucking at
Their courses.
Fearfully the dog, and then the shepherd
Round the corner,
Drag crook and tail.
The sheep are like poor wraiths.
On the fire crackles in the cot hid in the shoulder
Of the hill, and warm, wedged fleeces snuggle in the fold.
Where is then the sheep-dog? where his panting? . . .
"He pants no longer."
Does his spirit wander up among the mountain-sides to
Drink the sucking runlets?
He climbs no more; scours not now or ever the craggy
Sheep tracks."
Where is now his spirit? In the cot beside his master?
No. I see his spirit now. It lies
On the green field
Where the sheep
Are folded—
It is the fold."

ALEXANDER GRAY

ON COMPLETING A TASK—DRAWING HOUSES—
BABYLON IN RETROSPECT

ON COMPLETING A TASK

from the "English Review"

I HAVE been long a bondsman; I have spent
The days in loveless labour, and have grudged
The hours of slumber. I have toiled and drudged
To reach the goal on which my eyes were bent.
This year I have not heard the yorling sing,
Nor seen the ploughed land clothe itself in green,
Nor cornfields turning yellow. All unseen
Autumn has followed summer, summer spring.

I said, when this is ended I will seek
The golden fields where reapers bind the sheaves,
And hear the bleating of the moorland sheep.
And now,—my eyes are dim, my hands are weak;
I do not ask to see the drifting leaves—
Grant me, O Lord, Thy gift, the gift of sleep.

DRAWING HOUSES

hitherto unpublished

PAPER and pencil in his hand
He clambers on my knee.
A big house, a huge house,
Is what he wants to see.

And first I draw King George's house,
With windows up and down.
It's the biggest house, the hugest house,
You'll find in London town.

And then I draw the Tower house,
Its walls are gaunt and bare.
It's a bad house, a sad house,
For those who enter there.

And many another gallant house
I draw for little John,
With plum-trees and apple-trees
And lamp-posts on the lawn.

But always ere the game is done
One house comes back to me:
There's a little house, a singing stream
And a lonely rowan-tree.

The little rascal laughs aloud,
And asks me what I mean
By the little house, the lonely tree
And the babbling stream between.

Jerusalem, may my hand rot
If I cease to remember thee!
O my ain hoose, my ain burn,
My bonny rowan-tree!

BABYLON IN RETROSPECT

I MIGHT dae waur than bide here a' my days,
Whaur a' thing's aye, year in year oot, the same;
Amang kent fowk, trailin' upon kent braes,
I micht dae waur than settle doon at hame.

To live content wi' little, kennin' weel
That this world's gear is coft wi' muckle care;
To hae a change o' claes, a puckle meal,
And peace o' mind—what needs a body mair?

To howk the grund whaur ance my forbears swat,
To see the kirkyaird whaur some day I'll rest;
Wha kens but mebbe some sic wey as that
Wad gar me trow that a' thing's for the best?

It scunners me to think I'll hae to face
Ance mair the senseless strokes I've left ahent;
For in that clorty, smeeky, godless place
There's naething that can gie a man content.

Wae's me to think on't, but your weary feet
May wander up and doon a hail year through,
And never in the towmond will you meet
A chield that's sib to ane that's sib to you.

C. M. GRIEVE

EDINBURGH—PLAYMATES—SONNETS OF THE
HIGHLAND HILLS (COURAGE, HEAVEN, RIVALS,
THE WIND-BAGS, VALEDICTORY)—THE FOOL—
THE LAST SONG

EDINBURGH

MIDNIGHT

GLASGOW is null,
Its suburbs shadows
And the Clyde a cloud.

Dundee is dust
And Aberdeen a shell.

But Edinburgh is a mad god's dream,
Fitful and dark,
Unseizable in Leith
And wildered by the Forth,
But irresistibly at last
Cleaving to sombre heights
Of passionate imagining
Till stonily,
From soaring battlements,
Earth eyes Eternity.

PLAYMATES

O THOU upon whose breasts
The pale skies dangle
Show me your heart!

Children we were together
And playmates long ago.

Do you remember
That funny old spare star
On which we kept pet nations?

The frantic little things!
But they were always fighting
And killed each other out at last.

All except America,
Poor old America!
Which went wrong in the head!
You took pity on it
And killed it too.

You were merciful then.

O Thou upon whose breasts
The pale skies dangle
Show me your heart!

SONNETS OF THE HIGHLAND HILLS

I

COURAGE

SINCE when I see a mountain my own heart
Is lifted mightily upon the dawn
And I am inoppugnably updrawn
And in the centuries take a founded part,
Let me recount my courage in the world
—With Slioch, and Ben Airidh a Char,* and Ben Lair,
Marscodh's twin peaks, and to the westward there
The javelins of Scur na Gillean hurled!

I name no more. Such are the moods I lift
Heedless into the troubled skies of Time,
Whence, see, how deviously slide and shift,
Gleaming, the songs I gather for my own
—And loose, in ecstasy, that so their rhyme
May rounded be by faithful seas unknown.

* Pronounced "Ben-achar."

SONNETS OF THE HIGHLAND HILLS

II

HEAVEN

IF, scaling skies precipitous, we reach
The gates we deem should give on Paradise
And pick their locks and find a void of skies
—A skyey void again!—and still have speech:
If thought be but a cranny in the wall
Where through we briefly glimpse the dazzling wor
And straight to endless dooms again are hurled
And blindly borne away, and that is all—

Let us give praise that unto us is given
To see on Blaven's and on Marsco's heads
The wild stars spill (and know it for our Heaven,
Seeking no cranny but the Scalpay view),
The timeless magic of their greens and reds,
Nor further climb in search of wonders new.

SONNETS OF THE HIGHLAND HILLS

III

RIVALS

TO M. G.

THE multitudinous and various hills
Court thee. Shyly at dawn attending thee
Or bending in the twilight tenderly
They vie to pleasure thee, and my heart fills
(In silence there beyond each dawn whereon
Your eyes with passion seize, beyond each night
That thrills you with enchantment and delight)
With mingled pride, and grief for dreams foregone.

You do not greet me as you welcome these,
Though kind your smile and intimate your nod,
I know too well with what bright mysteries
Your eyes on Briareach turn: and how you run
To where Schiehallion standing like a god
Turns me to dust and ashes in the sun!

SONNETS OF THE HIGHLAND HILLS

IV

THE WIND-BAGS

RAIN - BEATEN stones: great tussocks of d
grass
And stagnant waters throwing leaden lights
To leaden skies: a rough-maned wind that bites
With aimless violence at the clouds that pass,
Roaring, black-jowled, and bull-like in the void,
And I, in wild and boundless consciousness,
A brooding chaos, feel within me press
The corpse of Time, aborted, cold, negroid.

Aimless lightnings play intermittently,
Diffuse, vacant, dully, athwart the stones,
Involuntary thunders slip from me
And growl, inconsequently, hither, thither
—And now converse, see-saws of sighs and groans,
Oblivion and Eternity together!

GILDERMORIE,
November 1920.

SONNETS OF THE HIGHLAND HILLS

V

VALEDICTORY*

PARNASSUS and Schiehallion are one,
But one hill is that any life may climb,
One Pisgah from whose summit lies sublime
The land of Promise in the morning sun.
But all bones whiten ere the goal is won.
Parnassus or Schiehallion—each song
The grateful echoes for a time prolong,
But silence falls before the song is done.

Schiehallion and Calvary are one.
All men at last hang broken on the Cross,
Calling to One who gives a blackening sun.
There is one hill up which each soul is thrust
Ere all is levelled in eternal loss,
The peaks and plains are one. The end is dust.

* These five Sonnets are taken from a privately-circulated sequence of fifty

THE FOOL

HE said that he was God.
“We are well met,” I cried,
“I’ve always hoped I should
Meet God before I died!”

I slew him then and cast
His corpse into a pool
—But how I wish he had
Indeed been God, the fool!

THE LAST SONG

THE heavens are lying like wreaths
Of dead flowers breaking to dust
Round the broken column of Time.

Like a fitful wind and a cold
That rustles the withered stars
And the wisps of space is my rhyme,

Like a fitful wind and a cold
That whistles awhile and fails
Round the broken column of Time.

IAN HAMILTON

GORDON—A NIGHT AT HAFTON

GORDON

from the "English Review"

W HERE the Blue Nile into the White Nile slips;
Where the long betrothed at last link hands;
The ghosts of the dead men move their lips
And the sigh of the wind o'er the desert sands
Bears the whispered name—Charles Gordon.

The murmur springs from the monstrous grave
Of the thrice ten thousand cruelly slain,
But the blue wave sobs to the milky wave,
"Once I bore on my bosom a crimson stain
From the heart of their god—Charles Gordon."

Yet ever the more, through all the land,
From Bahr el Ghazl to Kordofan,
That name is a spell to strengthen our hand—
As the sign of the Cross, that name of a Man—
Of the Cross they fastened our Lord on.

Kitchener conquered and Wingate reigns:
No better soldiers; great their glory:
The moth and the rust shall dispute their gains
While there, like a lantern of God, shines the story
Of the warrior who buckled no sword on.

Look, where our flag, like a restless flame,
Proclaims afar the end of fear;
Where would it be but for deeds of fame;
But for the man who stood under it—here!
As the Dervishes stormed—Charles Gordon?

From the steps his pinnace kept signalling, *Come—*
Our steam is up—the Nile flows red—
Closer each throb of the Dervish drum—
Khartoum is lost—your men are dead;
And—life is sweet, Charles Gordon!

NORTHERN NUMBERS

When the thirsty spears set his spirit free,

He met them, we know, as friend meets friend:

Sharp keys were they to Eternity,

But he has it—you swear—death was never the end
Of the leader we loved—Charles Gordon!

KHARTOUM,

January 1913.

A NIGHT AT HAFTON

SNUGLY tucked behind the curtains,
Very quiet, quite forgotten,
Reading Sanford's life and Merton's
While my Aunts plied silk or cotton;
Enormous spread each crinoline,
Flounce upon flounce of bombasine.

Next the fire sat my Granny;
Black her dress yet rich and lustrous:
As I eyed her through a cranny,
Click, click, click, she knit industrious:
"She's forty-five, if she's a day,"
So did I once hear Henriette say.

Joys like butterflies have wings—
Hardly settled ere they flutter—
So my book's leaves (crinkly things)
Rustled to my paper-cutter.
Though still I kept—as squats a hare
When hounds are out for toothsome fare.

*What was that? Well I declare,
Little Ian! It's past eleven!
Wide-awake and reading there?
At your age I slept at seven.
Kiss your Aunts—trot off upstairs—
Take care you don't forget your prayers.*

So at eerie dead of night
I must quit the cheery room,
Crackling fire and laughing light,
For the silence and the gloom;
Walking down the passage boldly,
Hearing footsteps echo coldly.

On I hurry, heart in mouth,
Clasping tight my candle tall;
Past the antlered heads uncouth,
Through the vastness of the hall,

NORTHERN NUMBERS

By that door whence, with a pounce,
Miss Parker jumped upon me once.

There! at length I reach the landing;
Fast behind me shuts the door;
All seems safe to me there standing—
Listening—trembling—on the floor.
Yet—suppose beneath the bed
A wolf lay listening to my tread?

Fearfully my prayers I mutter—
Shadows like a hearse's plume
Crawling with each candle splutter
From the corners, through the room.
Dancing to my words devout—
As if they know the light must out!

Taking courage—heart of grace—
One wild puff, the deed is done,
A flying leap through pitch-black space
And then the bed is fairly won.
Where, head covered up, I cower
Till the stillest midnight hour.

Midst the stillness of the night,
See me like a small mouse lying,
In four-poster, vast and white,
Paralysed—no hope of sleep,
Listening for a stealthy creep.

For, until that midnight hour,
Denser, tenser draws the night
Round the top of Hafton's tower,
Round a tiny, trembling wight:
Then, comes slumber soft at last,
And the power of ghosts is past.

ON THE TRAIN,
SIBERIA,
6/10/12.

ISOBEL WYLIE HUTCHISON

A SONG OF SEEING—A SONG OF PARADISE—TO AN
ALMOND-TREE ON THE JANICULUM—FOR THOSE AT
SEA—THE HERRING

A SONG OF SEEING

from the "Englishwoman"

I THOUGHT upon the wonder of the spring
A day when she was young and everything
Was shooting into fresh and sappy green.
 "Alas! It has long been
 The winter time," I said,
 And bowed my head
And with my hand caressed amid the grass
A daisy, for my heart's a childish lass
 Loving what's strange and new,
 The chionodoxa's blue,
The glistening and reflective celandine,
But most of all the violet that is fine
And delicately lidded, with the breath
Of dewy April that can know no death.
The scent of all that's young is wrapt in her
 And when I see the stir
Of blue-capt stalks along the southern border
 I know that God doth order
His joyous mind to manifest the spring,
Until His thought hath put in everything
New life, new love, new splendour, new desire,
And all the world sings "Life! Life! Life!" Like a choir
 Of birds,
 Of happy birds that sing,
 Having no need of words
 To intersperse
 Their most melodious verse.

I pondered all this beauty that I mention,
The living thought of God, and His intention
Toward earth and me, who am a part of earth,
For though they tell me that I had my birth
 Some other where,
 I do not greatly care
 If this be true or no.
 I think it's partly so.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

But I believe that we're all sent to gather
Some earthly treasure for the Heavenly Father
Till He recall us from His dewy field
At evening-time, building a finer bield
For souls returning mindful of earth's beauty,
Not naked as they came—a faithful duty
—Although she's not done all that she intended—
 Is never barrenly expended,
 For to her shall accrue
Some lovely hint of all she meant to do.

Thinking upon these things I came upon
A wayworn warrior seated on a lawn
In khaki coat and sickroom suit of sky
As bright as any scilla that came by
The soft brown earth in early days of March.
He sat with down-bent head and made an arch,
Leaning his brow, his elbow on his knee.
And when I looked I saw he could not see.

He could not see the flimsy clouds in air
 Nor the bright sunshine everywhere
 —Unless it made a uniform shining
 Against his eyelid's lining—
He could not see above the daisy-root
The bright rosette of leaves beneath his boot,
And for his pleasuring the wallflower lent
 Only her spicy scent.

I sat me down beside him on the grass
And told him how the clouds did pass
This way and that as if they'd lost their bearing
 Hither and thither faring,
And how at times the wind came pouff! And blew
 A little straggly hole right through.
And how the sun made shadow-clouds, and how
The cherry looked with spring astride her bough.

ISOBEL WYLIE HUTCHISON

How in the yew-tree was a nest with eggs
That you could see a-tiptoe on your legs,
But if you went more cautiously and tried
To make no noise, you'd get the bird inside
With eyes like buttons, black and very bright
And full of fright.

I told him all these things and many more,
And when I'd done he made me tell them o'er
Another time, especially the bit
About the nest, what kind of bird was it?
And if the eggs were spotted or quite plain?
And so I told it to him over again.

He sat awhile remembering in pleasure
And I laid up for treasure
The light his mind had lit behind his face,
That speaking-place.
It was so bright,
So full of vivid sight
That presently I asked him what he saw.
He said: "The winter's thaw."

And afterward I thought upon his look,
Reading in that clear book
The great perception of the conscious mind
That is not ever blind,
But looks before and after and descries
The Truth for which a man will give his eyes.
By this his night has vision and a sense
That is his recompense,
The beauty of the little eye of day
Comes to him in another way,
And following in the night this guiding star
He sees things as they are.

A SONG OF PARADISE

from the "Westminster Gazette"

I'M an auld body noo, an' dune,
No fit for muckle mair
Than juist tae sit an' mind the fire
An' watch the glory there
Burn doon an' gaither on the ribs
An' fa' into the pan,
An' aye I think it's like the spark
That's in the breist o' man.

The minister comes ben at whiles
An' talks tae me o' God.
He's a well-meanin', canty lad,
An' yet I canna' haud
Wi' a' he says. There's some that's gane
(The Lord forgie!) I tell
Ye I had liefer see again
Than even God Himsel'.

An' yet there's some I'm sweir tae think
I'll come across up there!
My guid-sister was ane o' these
(In spite o' a' her care!).
I aye keep hopin' (though it's wrang!),
If she's got slippin' ben,
They'll let me oot anither way
An' doon the stair again!

They say there's mony mansions there
An' weel I hope it's meant,
I wadna like tae find masel'
Shut up wi' a' I've kent!
I'm no' for harps or golden croons,
I've tried tae dae my best
An' syne I've trusted Paradise
Wad be a place o' rest.

ISOBEL WYLIE HUTCHISON

Sae whiles at nicht I watch the fire
An' in the ashes fa'
I think I see the wee cot hoose
Where a' the bairns were sma'.
The water lippin' on the shore,
The kirk upon the rise—
I dinna want a mansion, Lord,
Wi' that for Paradise.

TO AN ALMOND-TREE ON THE JANICULUM

from "Lyrics from West Lothian" and "Chambers's Journal"

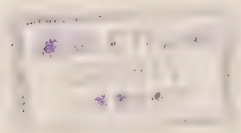
I SAW an almond-tree to-day,
A blaze of flowers against the blue
Of infinite infinity
In places where the sky looked through
Its branches. Such a lovely thing!
I felt as if I ought to sing.

I felt as if I ought to sing,
Yet seemed it any song of mine
Might here profane some sacred thing—
Some half-seen element divine
That to those boughs like incense clung,
As if I sang where God had sung.

FOR THOSE AT SEA

from "Lyrics from West Lothian" and the "Westminster Gazette"

THE shining starfish and the inspirèd weed
Shall clamber in your fingers unafraid.
Your bright astonished eyes shall take their meed
Of Leviathan and the treasure that is laid
On the floors of ocean. Ye shall never see
Through the green arteries of the watery deep
The tedious growth of earth, yet shall ye be
Changed in her change, and lapped in Protean sleep
Your sympathetic hands shall softly move
With the music of her tides in their ebb and flow.
Ye shall be part of all that ye did love,
Mid strange new-fangled dreams lulled to and fro
In the wake of moons and stars outnumberèd,
Until the unplumbed sea restore her dead.



THE HERRING

I N the deep I slip and roll
Sliding with the glittering shoal,
All the superficial sea
Laughs and tumbles after me.

What care I for things of earth?
In the deep I had my birth,
Down upon her sandy dregs,
One of thirty thousand eggs.

Monstrous, I devour my spawn,
Or the sand-eel or the prawn,
All oblivious that I move
With a moon and tide above.

Do I merely thus express
Some dead-end of consciousness,
Outcast of the homing tide
On whose careless breast I ride?

Or am I the conscious thought
That a mind in beauty wrought,
Within whose love the shuddering moon
Is warm again as summer noon?

VIOLET JACOB

TAM O' THE KIRK—THE BLIND SHEPHERD

TAM I' THE KIRK

O H, Jean, my Jean, when the bell ca's the congrega-
tion
Owre valley an' hill wi' the ding frae its iron mou',
When a'bod's thochts is set on his ain salvation,
Mine's set on you.

There's a reid rose lies on the buik o' the Word afore ye
That was growin' braw on its bush at the keek o' day,
But the lad that pu'ed yon flower i' the mornin's glory,
He canna pray.

He canna pray; but there's nane i' the kirk will heed him
Whaur he sits sae still his lane at the side o' the wa',
For nane but the reid rose kens what my lassie gied him—
It an' us twa!

He canna sing for the sang that his ain he'rt raises,
He canna see for the mist that's afore his een,
And a voice drouns the hale o' the Psalms and the Para-
phrases,
Cryin', "Jean, Jean, Jean!"

THE BLIND SHEPHERD

THE land is white, an' far awa'
Abune are bush an' tree,
Nae fit is movin' i' the snaw,
On the hills I canna see.
For the sun may shine an' the darkness fa',
But aye it's nicht to me.

I hear the whaup on windy days
Cry up amang the peat
Whaur, on the road that speels the braes,
I've heard my ain sheep's feet,
An' the bonnie lambs wi' their canny ways,
An' the silly yowes that bleat.

But noo wi' them I maunna be,
An' by the fire I bide
To sit and listen patiently
For a fit on the great hillside.
A fit that'll come to the door for me
Doon through the pasture wide.

Maybe I'll hear the baain' flocks
Ae nicht when time seems lang,
An' ken there's a step on the scattered rocks
The fleggitt sheep amang,
An' a voice that cries, an' a hand that knocks,
To bid me rise an' gang.

Then to the hills I'll lift my een—
Nae maitter though they're blind,
For Ane will treid the stanes between
And I will walk behind.
Till up, far up i' the midnight keen
The licht o' Heaven I'll find.

VIOLET JACOB

An' maybe when I'm up the hill
An' stand abune the steep,
I'll turn aince mair to look my fill
On my ain auld flock o' sheep.
An' I'll leave them lyin' sae white an' still
On the quiet braes asleep.

RODERICK WATSON KERR

DESIRE

DESIRE

OH to flash like a sword clear and bright and naked
Through the thunderous night, tempered keen;
Quivering with energy, to leap
Unchained from solid pillory of sloth
Like a cascade shivering into radiance
From its rock; to cleave the pommelling surf
With sinews taut and straining muscles rippling
Round the flesh like flow of licking fire;
Naked, naked, oh, to feel the waters
Sting and beat against the sides like lances;
Buffed, but punching back, blow for blow,
To strike upon the cestused deep, dauntless!
Naked, naked, oh, in burning list
To feel the tang of lion claws tingle
Through the blood, and the hot opposing breath
Leap upon the face! Oh, resolutely
In the thronged heat of day, to out-camel
Camels on the bastinadoing sand!
Fronting fanged Existence throat to throat,
Oh, to love the tawny fierce Protagonist,
And in the gladiatorial fight, to laugh!

DONALD A. MACKENZIE

SONG—A SUMMER NIGHT—THE ETERNAL PAST—
EDINBURGH—SOME CRITICS—THE SCOUT (FROM
“THE FEANS OF KNOCKFARREL”)

SONG

PEEWEE, peewee, crying sweet,
Crying early, crying late—
Will your voice be never weary
Crying for your mate?
Other hearts than thine are lonely,
Other hearts must wait.

Peewee, peewee, I'd be flying
O'er the hills and o'er the sea,
Till I found the love I long for
Wheresoe'er he'd be.
Peewee crying, I'd be flying,
Could I fly like thee!

A SUMMER NIGHT

THE silence of the stars serene and strong
Possessed the listening summer night, until
Out of the dark west swept with sudden thrill
A faerie gust that brought an unseen throng
To fill the wood with music, mirth and song
And leaf-like trippings light. Then all grew still—
The blithe throng passed but leaving o'er the hill
A bright star dancing on. . . . That whole night long
Sounds still more strange around the hillside rose—
The stammering of waves, now loud, now low:
The slumberous murmurs of the star-gemmed sea
In ebon beauty laid and deep repose,
Dreaming its dreams all gloomful or aglow
Of ages past and ages yet to be.

THE ETERNAL PAST

LIKE to the night-cloud's shadow o'er the sea
Fell the swift thought of death; and then mused I
On those who in this quiet graveyard lie,
Until the days long past came back to me.
How near in such an hour our dead can be!
We hear them speak, but cannot make reply;
We can but look and list as they go by,
While fall Time's deep'ning shadows, silently.

Past, present, death and life all seem to be
In twilight blended; while that voice of light,
The evening star, Weird of the western sky,
Proclaims the dead live on, the living die,
The lonesome future is like falling night,
The past a vision of Eternity.

EDINBURGH

O F old thou wert a patroness of Art,
Ready with recognition and reward;
Not shallow, cold and purse-proud, with regard
For outward show. Thou play'dst a worthier part.
Thy fame grew not in factory, office, mart,
But in bare garrets high where, striving hard,
The scholar, painter, architect and bard
Thee in young manhood served with head and heart.

Now thou dost seek strange gods! Thy light grows dim,
Commerce is placed o'er Art; the harp is dumb,
The pen unhonoured: wealth doth learning shun.
Wouldst thou raise monuments to merchants grim,
Bankers, Insurance lords? Wouldst thou become,
O Modern Athens, Modern Babylon?

SOME CRITICS

PITY the critic who makes no pretence
To criticise his week-end pile of books
That haunt him during golf like restless spooks,
When, heartily, he sends each author hence!
His art, alas! is sunk in decadence
Through haste and overwork. To praise, he looks
For favoured names; he shoots the rest like rooks
And sells such game per brace for eighteenpence.

Others are stickit authors whose sad plight
Breeds jealous wrath; or pert lads lecturing those
Who, after many years, have learned to write;
Or hirelings who can wound with blundering ease
Art-serving bards, and likewise mangle prose
To wallow in the mire of journealese.

THE SCOUT

from "The Feans of Knockfarrel"

THEN Fewn to Cæilte spake and gave command
To hasten forth before the Fean band—
The King of Scouts was he! And, like the deer,
He sped to find if foemen had come near—
Fierce, swarthy hillmen, waiting at the fords,
For combat eager, or red Viking hordes
From out the Northern Isles. . . . In Alba wide
No runner could keep pace by Cæilte's side;
And ere the Feans, following in his path,
Had wended from the deep and dusky strath,*
He swept o'er Clyne and heard the homing owls
That hoot afar and near in wooded Foulis;
And he had reached the slopes of fair Rosskeen,
Ere Fewn by Fyrish came.

The dawn broke green,
For the high huntsman of the morn had flung
His mantle o'er his back: stooping he strung
His silvern bow, then rising, bright and bold,
He shot his burning arrow of pure gold
That rent the heart of night.

As far behind
The Feans followed, Cæilte, like the wind,
Sped on with feet unwearied o'er the wide
And airy moor and 'thwart the mountain-side,
By Delny's shore far-ebbed and wan and brown,
And through the woods of beauteous Balnagown:
The roaring streams he vaulted on his spear
And foaming torrents leapt, as he drew near
The sandy slopes of Nigg. He climbed and ran
Till high above Dunskaith he stood to scan
The outer ocean for the Viking ships,
Peering below his hand, with panting lips

* Strathpeffer.

DONALD A. MACKENZIE

Agape, but wide and empty lay the sea
Beyond the barrier crags of Cromarty
To the far skyline sharp and blue and bare,
For no red pirate ventured yet to dare
The gloomy hazards of the fitful seas,
The gusty terrors and the treacheries
Of fickle April of the changing skies.
And while he scanned the waves with curious eyes,
The sea-wind in his nostrils, who had spent
A long bleak winter in Knockfarrel pent
Above the snow-wreathed strath and buried wood,
A sense of freedom tingled in his blood:
The large life of the ocean heaving wide
Possessed his heart with gladness and with pride
And he rejoiced to be alive. Once more
He heard the drenching waves on that rough shore
Raking the shingles, while the glistening rocks
Swung in the gurgling brine their long brown locks
Of lapping tangle, and the broken ledges
Poured back the swirling waters o'er their edges;
And while unheard across the flashing firth,
As was the hill-wood swayed with windy mirth,
The billow breaking on the precipice,
With spout of spray, fell spreading like a fleece.

Sullen and sunken lay the reef, with sleek
And foaming lips, before the flooded creek
Deep-bunched with arrowy weed, its green expanse
Wind-wrinkled and translucent. A bright trance
Of sun-flung splendour lay athwart the wide
Blue ocean swept by loops of silvern tide,
Heavily heaving in a long slow swell.
A lonely fisher in his coracle
Came round a headland, lifted on a wave
That bore him through the shallows to his cave,
Nor other being he saw.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

The birds that flew
Clamorous about the cliffs, and diving drew
Their prey from bounteous waters, on him cast
Cold, beady eyes of wonder, wheeling past
And sliding down the wind.

CHARLES MURRAY

THE WHISTLE—THE TINKER—GIN I WAS GOD

THE WHISTLE

HE cut a sappy sucker from the muckle rodden-tree,
He trimmed it, an' he wet it, an' he thumped it on
his knee;
He never heard the teuchat when the harrow broke her
eggs,
He missed the craggit heron nabbin' puddocks in the seggs,
He forgot to hound the collie at the cattle when they strayed.
But you should hae seen the whistle that the wee herd
made!

He wheeped on't at mornin' an' he tweetled on't at nicht,
He puffed his freckled cheeks until his nose sank oot o'
sicht,
The kye were late for milkin' when he piped them up the
closs,
The kitlins got his supper syne, an' he was beddit boss;
But he cared na doit nor docken what they did or thocht or
said,
There was comfort in the whistle that the wee herd made.

For lyin' lang o' mornin's he had clawed the caup for weeks,
But noo he had his bonnet on afore the lave had breeks;
He was whistlin' to the porridge that were hott'rin' on the
fire,
He was whistlin' ower the travise to the baillie in the byre;
Nae a blackbird nor a mavis, that hae pipin' for their trade,
Was a marrow for the whistle that the wee herd made.

He played a march to battle. It cam' dirlin' through the
mist,
Till the halflin' squared his shou'ders an' made up his mind
to 'list;
He tried a spring for woers, though he wistna what it
meant,
But the kitchen-lass was lauchin' an' he thocht she maybe
kent;

NORTHERN NUMBERS

He got ream an' buttered bannocks for the lovin' lilt he
played.

Wasna that a cheery whistle that the wee herd made?

He blew them rants sae lively, schottisches, reels, an' jigs,
The foalie flang his muckle legs an' capered ower the rigs,
The grey-tailed futt'rat bobbie oot to hear his ain strath-

spey,

The bawd cam' loupin' through the corn to "Clean Peas
Strae,"

The feet o' ilka man an' beast gat youkie when he played—
Hae ye ever heard o' whistle like the wee herd made?

But the snaw it stopped the herdin' an' the winter brocht
him dool,

When in spite o' hacks and chilblains he was shod again
for school;

He couldna sough the Catechis nor pipe the rule o' three,
He was keepit in an' lickit when the ither loons got free;
But he aften played the truant—'twas the only thing he
played,

For the maister brunt the whistle that the wee herd made.

THE TINKER

GIN I was a sturdy tinker
Trampin' lang roads an' wide
An' ye was a beggar hizzie
Cadgin' the country-side,

The meal-bags a' your fortune,
A jinglin' wallet mine,
I wouldna swap for a kingdom
Ae blink o' my raggit queyn.

The gowd that hings at your lugs, lass,
I would hammer it for a ring,
Syne, hey for a tinker's waddin'
An' the lythe dyke-sides o' Spring.

Oh, whiles we would tak' the turnpike
An' lauch at the Norlan' win',
An' whiles we would try the lown roads
An' the wee hill-tracks that rin

Whaur the blue peat reek is curlin'
An' the mavis whussles rare,
We'd follow the airt we fancied
Wi' nane that we kent to care.

An' ye would get the white siller
• Spaein' the lasses' han's,
An' I would win the brown siller
Cloutin' the aul' wives' cans.

Whiles wi' a stroop to souder,
Girdin' at times a cogue;
But aye wi' you at my elbuck
To haud me content, you rogue.

We'd wash in the rinnin' water,
An' I would lave your feet,
An' ye would lowse your apron
An' I would dry them wi't.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

I'd gather yows at gloamin',
An' ye would blaw the fire
Till the lilt o' the singin' kettle
Gart baith forget the tire.

An' blithe my cutty luntin',
We'd crack about a' we'd seen,
Wi' mony a twa-han' banter
Aneth the risin' meen.

Syne in some cosy plantin'
Wi' fern and heather spread,
An' the green birks for rafters
The lift would roof your bed.

An' when your een grew weary,
Twa stars would tine their licht,
An' saftly in my oxter
I'd faul' ye for the nicht.

Nae cry frae frichtened mawkin
Snared in the dewy grass,
Nor eerie oolet huntin'
Would wauken you then, my lass.

An' when the mists were liftin',
An' the reid sun raise to peep,
Ye would only cuddle the closer,
An' lauch to me in your sleep.

Wi' a' the warl' to wander,
An' the fine things yet to see,
Will you kilt your coats an' follow
The lang, lang road wi' me?

The open lift an' laughter,
Is there onything mair you lack?
*A wee heid in the bundle
That shouds upon my back.*

GIN I WAS GOD

GIN I was God, sittin' up there abeen,
Weariet nae doot noo a' my darg was deen,
Deaved wi' the harps an' hymns oonendin' ringin',
Tired o' the flockin' angels hairse wi' singin',
To some clood-edge I'd daunder furth an', feth,
Look ower an' watch hoo things were gyaun aneth.
Syne, gin I saw hoo men I'd made mysel'
Had startit in to pooshan, sheet and fell,
To reive an' rape, an' fairly mak' a hell
O' my braw birlin' Earth—a hale week's wark—
I'd cast my coat again, rowe up my sark,
An', or they'd time to lench a second ark,
Tak' back my word an' sen' anither spate,
Droon oot the hale hypothec, dicht the sklata,
Own my mistak', an', aince I'd cleared the brod,
Start a'thing owre again, gin I was God.

WILL H. OGILVIE

THE RAIDERS—MIST ON THE MOOR—WATER-IN-THE-
WOOD—HEATHER

THE RAIDERS

LAST night a Wind from Lammermoor came roaring
up the glen
With the tramp of trooping horses and the laugh of
reckless men
And struck a mailed hand on the gate and cried in rebel
glee:
"Come forth. Come forth, my Borderer, and ride the
March with me!"

I said, "Oh! Wind of Lammermoor, the night's too dark to
ride,
And all the men that fill the glen are ghosts of men that
died!
The floods are down in Bowmont Burn, the moss is fetlock-
deep;
Go back, wild Wind of Lammermoor, to Lauderdale—and
sleep!"

Out spoke the Wind of Lammermoor, "We know the road
right well,
The road that runs by Kale and Jed across the Carter Fell.
There is no man of all the men in this grey troop of mine
But blind might ride the Borderside from Teviothead to
Tyne!"

The horses fretted on their bits and pawed the flints to fire,
The riders swung them to the South full-faced to their
desire;
"Come!" said the Wind from Lammermoor, and spoke full
scornfully,
"Have ye no pride to mount and ride your fathers' road
with me?"

A roan horse to the gate they led, foam-flecked and tra-
velled far,
A snorting roan that tossed his head and flashed his fore-
head star.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

There came a sound of clashing steel and hoof-tramp up
the glen;
. . . And two by two we cantered through, a troop of
ghostly men!

.

I know not if the farms we fired are burned to ashes yet!
I know not if the stirks grew tired before the stars were set!
I only know that late last night when Northern winds blew
free,
A troop of men rode up the glen and brought a horse for
me!

MIST ON THE MOOR

COOL and scented and sweet
The mist ran over the moor,
A witch upon light, white feet,
Subtle and swift and sure.

Laughing, she lifted her cloak
At the dawn-wind's word, and lo!
The heath on the hillside woke
And burned with a wine-red glow.

Running, she raised her arm,
And under the curve of her breast
Was the wild thyme's purple charm
And the blue-bell's blue confessed.

She waved her silver wand
As the wind made play on the wold,
And here and there was a frond
Of the bracken suddenly gold.

Silver-sandalled and crowned,
Like a Queen to the West she swept,
But the touch of her foot on the ground
Was a joy that the moorland kept.

WATER-IN-THE-WOOD

MAID of many moods
That vary
'Twixt the first green willow and the snow,
Water-in-the-Wood's
The fairy
Sweetest of the fairies that I know!

Water-in-the-Wood!
I hear her
Weaving mid the grasses of her choice
Melody subdued,
Yet clearer
Even than the running river's voice!

Spring!—She's then a witch
Entrapping
March to be the mother of a flower.
Hark, adown the ditch,
Tap-tapping,
Goes her wand of wizardry and power!

Summer!—'Neath the wood
Slow swinging
Built her by the boughs' new green,
Water-in-the-Wood
Runs, singing
Ballads of the beauty she has seen!

Autumn!—When the red
Leaves, sailing,
Scatter in the storm-winds rude,
Round about their bed
Goes wailing,
Sorrowfully, Water-in-the-Wood!

Winter!—When the frost
Comes setting
Every blade a-silver in the light,

WILL H. OGILVIE

With her new gems crossed
Sits, netting,
Lazily, her ladyship in white!

Maid of many moods
That vary
'Twixt the first green willow and the snow,
Water-in-the-Wood's
The fairy
Sweetest of the fairies that I know!

HEATHER

HIGH above the Highland glen
 Flamed and burned the purple heather—
Colours never mixed of men,
 Tints no painter put together;

And I guessed that, where I trod,
 Quaffing his Olympian fill,
Rudely had some reeling god
 Spilt his wine-cup on the hill.

• WILLIAM OGILVIE

STRAUGHT, STRAUGHT'S A REED

STRAUGHT, STRAUGHT'S A REED

O H, but it was a bonny corpse
An' straught, straught's a reed.
Oh, but it was a bonny sight
To look on't lyin' deid.

Wi' naething stickin' out ava
Frae the taes to the heid,
An' a bonny smile about his mou',
When he was lyin' deid.

The neighbours a' cam' troopin' ben
To look on't lyin' deid,
For oh, he was the bonny corpse
An' straught, straught's a reed.

"We canna thole to look on him
Straught, straught's a reed,
We like to think he's livin' yet,
Though fine we ken he's deid."

But in they gaed, an' out they cam',
An' mighty proud to tell,
"It's bonny, bonny as a wean,
An' awfu' like himsel'."

That night efter the funeral
The auld wife grat fu' loud.
She cursed her man, she cursed the will,
She swore, an' swear she could.

She cursed, she grat, she grat, she cursed,
Wi' mony unholy name,
She shocked auld Jockie frae the North
O' strict religious fame.

She shocked auld Jockie frae the North,
She cared na hoo she spak',
She cursed the Lawyer, cursed the Priest,
She cursed the unholy pack.

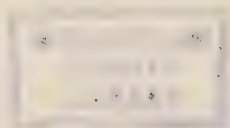
NORTHERN NUMBERS

"An' if I had my man this night
I'd tear him limb frae limb.
The siller's mine, the siller's mine,
I wrought for't weel as him.

"I tell ye gin I was na blind,
Ay, blind i' baith my een,
To see my man o' business'
To Enbrugh Toon I'd been.

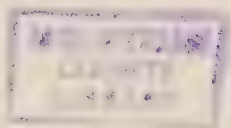
"I warrant ye I'll get my rights,
I'll mak the callant glow'r.
To Enbrugh Toon I'm gane
Gin Michaelmas be owre."

To Enbrugh Toon, to Enbrugh Toon,
Straught, straught's a reed,
To Enbrugh Toon ere Michaelmas
They've ta'en the auld wife deid.



SIR RONALD ROSS

HESPERUS—SHAKESPEARE, 1916—SONG OF THE
MOON—SONG OF THE SUN



HESPERUS

from "Lyra Modulata"

AH, whither dost thou float, sweet silent star,
In yonder floods of evening's dying light?
Before the fanning wings of rising night,
Methinks thy silvery barque is driven far
To some lone isle or calmly haven'd shore,
Where the lorn eye of man can follow thee no more.

How many a one hath watch'd thee even as I,
And unto thee and thy receding ray
Pour'd forth his thoughts with many a treasured sigh
Too sweet and strange for the remorseless day;
But thou hast gone and left unto his sight
Too great a host of stars, and yet too black a night.

E'en as I gaze upon thee, thy bright form
Doth sail away among the cloudy isles
Around whose shores the sea of sunlight smiles;
On thee may break no black and boisterous storm
To turn the tenor of thy calm career;
As thou wert long ago so now thou dost appear.

Art thou a tear left by the exiled day
Upon the dusky cheek of drowsy night?
Or dost thou as a lark carol alway
Full in the liquid glow of heavenly light?
Or, bent on discord and angelic wars,
As some bright spirit tread before the trooping stars?

The disenchanted vapours hide thee fast;
The watery twilight fades and night comes on;
One lingering moment more and thou art gone,
Lost in the rising sea of clouds that cast
Their inundations o'er the darkening air;
And wild the night wind wails the lightless world's despair.

SHAKESPEARE, 1916

from "The Book of Homage," Oxford, 1916

NOW when the sinking Sun reeketh with blood
And the gore-gushing vapours rent by him
Rend him and bury him: now the World is dir
As when great thunders gather for the flood;
And in the darkness men die where they stood,
And dying slay, or scatter'd limb from limb
Cease in a flash where mad-eyed cherubim
Of Death destroy them in the night and mud:
When landmarks vanish—murder is become
A glory—cowardice, conscience—and to lie,
A law—to govern, but to serve a time:—
We dying, lifting bloodied eyes and dumb,
Behold the silver star serene on high,
That is thy spirit there, O Master Mind sublime.

SONG OF THE MOON

from "Psychologies"

COME all creatures of delight,
Beauty's brightest in the night.
I am Beauty, and I bear
Emeralds in my amber hair,
And a crystal gemmary
To adorn earth, air and sea.
I am watching Wisdom too,
For, while others dream, I do—
Light the world to let men know
Where's the way for them to go.
I am Love, for I behold
All things ever and of old;
Stars with eager eyes, new-born,
Blind ones wandering forlorn;
Watch the evening, watch the morn,
Without envy, without scorn.
New things may be bright or dull;
Only old things, beautiful.

Ever changing, aye the same,
Still I bear my orbèd flame—
Embers of thick fire won
From the planet-scarfèd Sun.
They that utter brightness burn;
Happier we who bear the urn;
So, content, I follow him,
Happier, lovelier, though more dim.

SONG OF THE SUN

from "Psychologies"

FROM the throng'd and thick world under
I arise with step of thunder.
Through the mantle of my fire,
Through my flaming locks of hair,
Glow the form that all desire,
But more bright than they can bear;
For although I make men see,
None can dare to gaze on me.
Whether I rise in fire or blood,
Mortals hail me lord or god.
Then, before my battling knees,
Bubbling boil the surging seas,
And the clouds are writhing brent
By my fiery chastisement.
With my right hand held on high,
I let Life, the Angel, fly;
With my left, I grip and quell
Death, the Old Man, dragg'd from hell.

But ye men, who bow so low
At my gorgeous orient, know
That for ever in chains I go.
I am lord, for I am slave;
Conqueror, because I save;
Master, for I must obey;
God, because I burn away.
Though my lordly planets pace,
Peers before my sovran face,
In them every grain of sand
Governs me with like command.
So within my empery,
Only he who serves is free
And shall win the victory.

MARY SYMON

THE ECHT-DAY CLOCK—THE SOLDIERS' CAIRN—HAME
(ST ANDREW'S DAY UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS)

THE ECHT-DAY CLOCK

WE'VE flitted, lad, we've flitted,
We've left the auld close mou';
We're tryin' to be gentry,
Wi' oor gilt an' ormolu.
The hoose is fu' o' bravities,
And a' new-fangled trock,
But I'd swap them a' the morn
For my guid auld echt-day clock.

I mind on't in the hoose at hame—
My granny's but-an'-ben—
Her owre-croon mutch aside it sat,
Her specs an' sneeshan pen;
An' throu' the wee gell winnock aye
Fu' bonnie mornin' broke,
As I binnered back the bed door
To see what 'twas o'clock.

The aumry wi' the cheena cups
A' spreckled red an' blue,
The soord that Uncle Willie took
Bleed-red fae Waterloo.
Were gran' eneuch: the kist o' drawers
Was nae a thing to mock;
But ane an' a', they bouket sma'
Aside the echt-day clock.

Its canny jow gied throu' the hoose
Like some laigh-chanted spell.
It cried, "Ye jaud, ye fuded the school,"
It speired, "Fa bosied Bell?"
It grat abeen the coffin-lid,
It timed the cradle's rock,
An' the lilt that rang in Eden
Cam' fae the echt-day clock.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

I'm missin't, losh, I'm missin't;
The shielin's gane langsyne;
The braes where ance I wandered
Nae mair ken tread o' mine.
A far-aff win' blaws owre them,
I'm my lane 'mong fremmit folk,
Since my hinmost frien' has left me,
My guid auld echt-day clock.

THE SOLDIERS' CAIRN

GIE me a hill wi' the heather on't,
An' a red sun drappin' doon,
Or the mists o' the mornin' risin' saft
Wi' the reek owre a wee grey toon.
Gie me a howe by the lang Glen roâd,
For it's there 'mang the whin and fern
(D'ye mind on't, Will? Are ye hearin', Dod?)
That we're biggin' the Soldiers' Cairn.

Far awa is the Flanders land
Wi' fremmit France atween,
But mony a howe o' them baith the day
Has a hap o' the Gordon green.
It's them we kent that's lyin' there,
An' it's nae wi' stane or airn
But wi' brakin' hearts, an' mem'ries sair,
That we're biggin' the Soldiers' Cairn.

Doon, laich doon the Dullan sings—
An' I ken o' an aul' sauch tree,
Where a wee loon's wahnies hingin' yet
That's dead in Picardy;
An' ilka win' fae the Conval's broo
Bends aye the buss o' earn,
Where aince he fuddled a name that noo
I'll read on the Soldiers' Cairn.

Oh! build it fine and build it fair,
Till it leaps to the moorland sky—
More, more than death is symbolled there,
Than tears or triumphs by.
There's the Dream Divine of a starward way
Our laggard feet would learn—
It's a new earth's corner-stone we'd lay
As we fashion the Soldiers' Cairn.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Lads in your plaidies lyin' still

· In lands we'll never see,

This lanely cairn on a hameland hill

Is a' that oor love can dee;

An' fine an' braw we'll mak' it a',

—*But oh, my Bairn, my Bairn,*

It's a cradle's croon that'll aye blaw doon

To me fae the Soldiers' Cairn.

HAME

(ST ANDREW'S DAY UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS)

GOD bless our land, our Scotland,
Grey glen an' misty brae,
The blue heights o' the Coolins,
The green haughs yont the Spey,
The weary wastes on Solway,
Snell winds blaw owre them a'—
But aye it's Hame, lad,
Yours an' mine, lad,
—Shielin' or ha'.

It's Hame, it's Hame for ever,
Let good or ill betide!
The croon o' some dear river,
The blink o' ae braeside.

God bless our land; it's yonder
Far in the cold North Sea:
But 'neath the old Saint's glamour
It's calling you an' me:
Your feet tread Libyan deserts,
Mine press the wattle's bloom,
But to-night we stand together
Among the broom.

It's Hame, it's Hame for ever,
Let shore or sea divide!
The croon o' some dear river,
The blink o' ae braeside.

God bless our land. We dream o't—
The days aye brakin' fine
On the lang, lane glints o' heather
In the glens we kent langsyne.

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Ay, we are Reubens, rovers,
 'Neath mony an alien star,
But flaunt the blue flag o'er us,
 Pipe up the "Braes o' Mar,"
And steppe and nullah vanish,
 And pomp and pelf and fame—
It's gloamin'—on a lown hillside,
 An' lads, . . . We're . . . Hame.

LEWIS SPENCE

HASCHISH (A FRAGMENT)—THE SHIPS OF SORROW—
ASHES OF ROSES—I CANNOT GUIDE YOU TO THE
LIGHT—MOCK HORROR

HASCHISH

(A FRAGMENT)

I SAW the palaces of Alraschid
Through the pale windows of a changeful dream
Glitter as frozen sea-foam; pyramid
On pyramid of silver marble's gleam,
Ice roofed with moonlight, and the doors did seem
Nailed with bright planets that from Heaven had slid
As meteors; so Allah might have bid
A scarlet cloud of alchemy Moresque
Illum'd the casements' spider Arabesque,
Reddening the rich intaglio,
Like magic squares of wine and snow,
In the moony courtyard far below.
The moon-smit minarets on high
With amber lamps are dimly dight,
And fountains in the fairy night
Singing splash mellifluously.
The Jinn the midnight fires of magic fan
And horoscopes are cast in Ispahan;
Through haunted windows came the rich laments
Of many soul-assailing instruments.
So tender, rapt and tense the tune
I sank down in an instant swoon,
And rose above the minarets,
The moony court, the fountain jets.
The body seemed the rusty sheath
My sword-like soul had left beneath.

.

I saw a love-lamp darkly hid
By a priestess in a pyramid,
Its ardent rose of flowery light
Shone like hope in sorrow's night.
A wind from Eblis clomb the carven stair
And plunged me in the darkness's despair,
I heard the rustling of the Pharaoh's flesh

NORTHERN NUMBERS

Like moving parchment; odours did enmesh
My senses, as in Persian cities
Where the rose-conservers' ditties
Fill the streets with song and fume
Of attar and mimosa-bloom.
So did that sweetly-scented horror come,
Moving along the corridor as dumb
As darkness; with a shriek I fled
From the all-too-odorous dead.
A hand enwrapped in Sinim's spice
Seized my soul as in a vice,
And turned my hot heart into ice . . .

.

THE SHIPS OF SORROW

COLD sea, whose spirit feels
Torture of cleaving keels,
Anguish that never heals,
Galleons' fret;
My soul is like to thee
A tortured thing, O sea,
The keels sweep over me
Of keen regret.

See my sad spirit's tide
Its surface scarified
Where ships of sorrow ride
Early and late.
Caravels fraught with care,
Galleys of grey despair,
Keen as the cleaving share
The prows of hate.

Then there doth rise in me,
As in thy soul, O sea,
Anguish and blasphemy,
Wrath for my woe.
Tempest within me wakes,
Storm-spite and thunder shakes;
Each sail that on me quakes
I overthrow!

When peaceful morning shines,
And on the whitening lines
Of my horizon twines
Flotsam most fell.
Then do I smile like thee,
Ships of my agony
Lie fathoms under me,
Drowned—it is well!

ASHES OF ROSES

ASHES of roses,
Shadows of song,
Than life more sweet,
Than death more strong.

All to the singer
Life discloses,
Songs that linger,
Ashes of roses.

I CANNOT GUIDE YOU TO THE LIGHT

I CANNOT guide you to the light,
The fields of day,
Mine eyes are only for the night
In which I stray.

The night—the night's familiar fear
Is in my heart,
Anguish and I are knit too near
Ever to part.

MOCK HORROR

NOW sunset fires the crimson-painted glass,
And casts a blazon on the faded walls,
On Holofernes in an arras falls,
Dabbling the severed head and mail of brass
With gore reflected in a murderous mass,
O'erstreaming on the Palestinian shawls
And purple-pranked pavilion, where calls
Triumphant Judith to the men who pass.

The sunset's blood upon the silken corse
Shows art supreme o'er nature; never yet
Was murder beautiful as is this sight.
The thoughts of art ne'er run a simple course.
God! but the woman's hands with blood are wet,
And scarlet is her scimitar of might!

LAUCLAN MACLEAN WATT

THE TRYST—IN THE HEBRIDES—A WIND FROM THE
WEST—ISLANDS OF MIST

THE TRYST

O THE way sometimes is low,
And the waters dark and deep,
And I stumble as I go.

But I have a tryst to keep.
It was plighted long ago
With some who lie asleep.

And though days go dragging slow,
And the sad hours graveward creep,
And the world is hush'd with woe,

I neither wail nor weep,
For they would not have it so,
And I have a tryst to keep.

IN THE HEBRIDES

I LIVE in a wide house, with stars in its roof-tree.
When night sinks over me mists are my curtains.
Lone waters, lapping, encircle my home.

Morn comes there lingeringly—leans o'er the mountains,
Meshing with silver the unsleeping waves.
Sometimes a ship sails by, proud in the daybreak.

Gathering tangle, or bait for the fishing folk,
Old men and women creep, stooping and rising.
Like birds from afar floats the laughter of children.

From the quiet creek where through night she lies rocking,
I push my white boat, and pull away seaward,
Waiting and listening, watching and dreaming.

Then, in the gloaming, row home through the wonder
West of star-witchery, while past my oar-blades
Flash the sea-people, all jewel-bespangled.

Lambent and languishing, low o'er the crooning
And sigh of the waters, the broad moon uprises.
By glow of my peat-fire I yield to her glamour.

Sagas come seeking me, tugging my heart-strings.
Sea-folk, far-faring, call from the ghost-land.
Then Sleep o'erwhelms me, till birds cry at dawn.

A WIND FROM THE WEST

TO-DAY a wind from the West out over the hills
came blowing—

Ah, how it made dim dreams and memories start!
And I thought that I smelt in my room the wild thyme
growing,

And the scent of the sweet bog-myrtle filled my heart.

Go back, O breath of the hills! Would that we went
together!

Tell how their lost child fares.

Whisper among the bracken, and say to the broom and
the heather

That still my heart is theirs.

Steal quietly as a dream along the glens that we know,
The glens that shall fade from me only when I lie dying;
Sink into peace in the quiet place silent and low
Where the dust men know not is lying.

Say still my heart is theirs—

Tell them I never forget—

That they never are drown'd in my joys nor crush'd in my
cares,

That I love them yet.

Yet!—Ah, there's never a heart like them now,

Nor ever can be again—

None, living or dying, like those dead hearts that are lying
Away in the West in the rain.

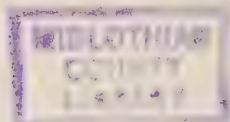
ISLANDS OF MIST

I HEAR the throbbing of waters that break upon lonely shores,
And the sigh of the wind in the hills where the heather is growing;
And old dead faded faces look out from the open doors,
Far away in the glens, where, ever, in dreams my soul is going.

Far away in the mountains, far at the back of the seas,
Where the soul goes groping slow, like a blind man feeling
For the latch that is rust and dust, long since blown over the leas,
Lost in the love forgotten by loch and sheiling.

It's a song of the dead they're singing, away by the rocks and sand,
Down by the silent place where the loved are sleeping;
And the young and the old together are lying like tired ones hand in hand;
And the only song is the sea's sad song, bitter, alone and weeping.

Far away in the mountains, far where the fathers lie,
Who shall blame us if ever our hearts must roam,
Hearing in towns the wash of the waves that break on the shores of Skye—
Far away, where the West is waiting her children turning home.



NORTHERN NUMBERS

FIRST SERIES

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